

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Masaji Uyehara

" . . . no more other jobs, yeah, those days. So they all go to American Café, Hibiscus Café, and work little while there, and learn the restaurant business. As soon as they learn, they open one. My oldest brother learned from Hibiscus Café. He was a carpenter before. Sam, those depression days, no more jobs. So nighttime he goes there, learn how to cook. Then we opened Smile Café. Then from Smile Café, you take like a guy used to own Sierra Café, young boy, can just learn how to cook. Ramona Café owner, he was working with us. Aloha Grill owner he used to work with us. . . . even New Capitol, Bert Uyehara, he was a waiter. And he learned how to cook. They all learned from our place, too. Then some guys learned from their restaurant. They're all friends. Oroku people, they hire Oroku people. They work hard, you know. "

Masaji Uyehara, fourth of nine children, was born in 1916 in Waiākea, Hawai'i, to Okinawan immigrants, Matsu and Oto Uyehara. His father was an independent sugarcane cultivator; his mother took in laundry and cooked meals.

In 1920 or 1921, the Uyehara family moved to Maukaloa, Pepe'ekeo Sugar Company Plantation. There, Masaji Uyehara and his siblings attended Pepe'ekeo School and Japanese-language classes.

In 1929, the family moved to Honolulu, O'ahu where Masaji attended Washington Intermediate School. In 1932, Masaji helped build and worked at Smile Café, a restaurant opened by older brother Sam Uyehara.

In 1938, Masaji Uyehara was hired as a cook at Kau Kau Corner. Later, he worked at other eateries and Smile Café.

In 1947, he operated the Ford Island Cafeteria. Later, he opened 'Ilima Drive Inn and 'Aiea Drive Inn. For twenty-seven years, beginning in 1972, he ran 'Ilima Catering.

Retired since 1999, Masaji Uyehara golfs and resides with family on O'ahu.

Tape No. 40-1-1-02

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Masaji Uyehara (MU)

Honolulu, O'ahu

May 30, 2002

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Masaji Uyehara for the Oroku Restaurants Project on May 30, 2002. We're at his home in Honolulu, O'ahu, and the interviewers are Warren Nishimoto and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

MK: Mr. Uyehara, easy question first. When were you born?

MU: Born 1916. I'll be eighty-six, an old man (chuckles).

MK: And then, where were you born?

MU: Born in Waiākea. Camp Four, I guess. Hilo.

MK: And what number child are you in the family?

MU: I'm the fourth in the family, second in the boys.

MK: And then who are all your siblings from the top to the last one?

MU: The oldest one is Sam, yeah. He's a boy. I have sister Kikue, and a sister Tomiko, and me. Then my sister, Mitsuko, and my brother Matsujiro, another brother Matsunobu, then Masayoshi, and Takeo, the last one (chuckles).

WN: How come you got Takeo?

MU: I don't know.

MK: What were your mother's and father's names?

MU: My father, his Okinawan name is Kana, yeah. And they used to call him Matsu. That's the reason why, I think, they named us all Masa, Masa. My father was Matsu. And my mother, I think it's Otome or Otue, I don't know. In Okinawa, they say, "Utu." They used to call her. (Chuckles)

MK: What was your mother's maiden name?

MU: Yogi.

- MK: I don't know how much you know about your parents' background, but what did you hear about your mother and father's families back in Okinawa?
- MU: I don't know anything about Okinawa. Only thing I know, I heard when my mother was here, as I told you before, she was a cook for all these laborers that went into the cane field to work. She was a cook, she was doing all the laundry, too.
- MK: And what *son* did your parents come from?
- MU: Where my parents come from? Oroku, Okinawa, yeah.
- MK: And what do you know about their coming over, immigrating to Hawai'i?
- MU: I don't know anything.
- MK: But your mother, you said, came with the brothers.
- MU: Came with her brothers, two brothers.
- MK: How did they meet, your mother and father?
- MU: I think my father was working, too, like all the Oroku people came down here to work in the cane field. So I guess, that's where they met.
- MK: What kind of work did your father do? Your mother did cooking and laundry.
- MU: Cane field [work]. Cut cane and all, raise cane for Waiākea Mill, I think, yeah?
- MK: In those days, some workers just worked for the plantation. Some workers, they did contract, yeah?
- MU: They all came for work in the cane fields, that's all they did. Raise cane and sell the cane to—I think it's Waiākea Mill, I don't know. They buy the cane. I think they give the field free. Tell them, "You guys go raise the cane, everything."
- MK: Your father was an independent cane grower, yeah?
- MU: Yeah, all together with the group. They call it "*Kompang* (partners)." That's a group, they worked together.
- MK: I know that you were born in Waiākea, but you left Waiākea when you were what age?
- MU: I don't know, but I think maybe I was three or four years old.
- MK: When you folks moved, where did you folks move to?
- MU: Pepe'ekeo, Maukaloa. Pepe'ekeo Plantation, New Camp.
- MK: What did that Maukaloa Camp look like?
- MU: I would say look like. . . . I know the last time, I remember, I think we had about fifty-two families over there because (we had) fifty-two houses. They made brand-new house for everybody at plantation. I think we had about three-bedroom house and, of course, we

had electricity that time. Before, the first time when I went Maukaloa, I think we had kerosene lamp. Then after that, I remember when I was going kindergarten, so maybe about when I was five years old, we had electric light. A stove, a kerosene stove, they give us free kerosene as long as you work the plantation. They give us, as I said, a vegetable garden, place to raise pig, a lot of chickens, a lot of eggs. Everything free but the pay was small, too, a dollar half a day. Dollar half a day, not one hour, you know, one day (chuckles). But still, we survived because everything was free.

WN: So when he moved to Pepe'ekeo, he wasn't a cane cultivator anymore?

MU: No, working for the plantation. In the meantime, I don't know how, but my father (had) four acres of cane field. Plantation gave it to some guys that really wanted to work. They give a place where it's a hard place to raise cane because the Caterpillars and machines cannot go (to the rough). Valley, so they gave it to the people. So (if) you want to go raise cane, go ahead. They give us free, no charge. Only thing, they buy cane after that, see. Every two years they cut cane. I remember we (made \$200 every two years).

WN: So he only got paid every two years?

MU: Yeah, cut cane.

WN: So he got paid by the ton, the weight?

MU: Yeah, by the weight, look like.

MK: So in addition to that contract cane, the independent cane, he was a worker for the plantation . . .

MU: The plantation, yeah.

MK: I was wondering what kind of work did he do?

MU: It was a small mule—what kind of a horse they call, small? You know, small mule. He (takes) about four or five. They (deliver) fertilizer. When they cut cane, they put flume, they carry it to the field, they unload. They had about three or four people doing that among the whole group, my father was one of them.

WN: So whatever they needed to carry that was kind of heavy.

MU: Yeah, fertilizer, or something. Pack up (on) the mule, he deliver.

WN: Did he take care of the mules, too?

MU: No, have a regular stableman. We stay right next to the stable, all the horses (were) there. Regular stableman. In the morning you just pick your horse, dress 'em up, and go out.

WN: You know that house you folks lived in, the fifty-two families, were they all pretty much the same? The size and everything?

MU: Same house. Yeah.

MK: What kind of people lived in Maukaloa Camp?

MU: It was mostly Japanese. When I say Japanese, Japanese and Okinawan mixed—only two nationality. Then when we left over there when I was only twelve years old, (later) the Filipinos came (to the camp). You know, plantation Filipinos from Philippine Islands.

MK: You know in that camp, how much mixing was there between the families in the camp? Like socializing?

MU: Everybody was very friendly, yeah. So, say that you want to kill pig. You want to make money, they alternate. You don't kill every—, "This week I'm going to kill pig," so they take orders. How many pounds of meat you want, that's how they do. Like chicken, everybody had chicken. Pig, too. Most guys, they had their own pig, but we had plenty pigs. So we ate pig and chicken (and vegetables).

WN: About how many pigs did you folks have?

MU: Pig? *Chee*, I think about five, six, pigs, though. Plenty.

MK: In those days, then, in terms of food, you had pig, you had chicken.

MU: Plenty vegetables.

MK: Plenty vegetables. How about your other supplies? Where did you get other things that you needed?

MU: Pepe'ekeo had a plantation, Pepe'ekeo Plantation (Store). And, the guy work (for) the plantation, they go to the house and they take orders. Well, maybe I need half a bag rice, some canned goods. He takes orders. The next day, he deliver to (us).

MK: So this order taker or the *chūmon-tori* . . .

MU: Yeah, *chūmon-tori*, they call that.

MK: . . . what store did he come from?

MU: Plantation store. And (we) had plantation hospital. When you get hurt you go to the hospital, everything free.

WN: How far away were you from the store and the hospital?

MU: Us guys, we the farthest ones. I'd say about two miles. To school, we walked three miles to school (chuckles). Pepe'ekeo School because we're in the mountains. In between we had stores, Pepe'ekeo store, post office, Pepe'ekeo hospital, on our way down. So sometimes you want to go to hospital in the morning while you're going to school, you drop over, change your Band-Aid or something (chuckles). Pepe'ekeo Plantation.

MK: And then this Pepe'ekeo School, that was three miles away.

MU: Three miles, yes.

MK: You walked every day?

MU: Yeah. Boy, that was (chuckles). . . .

MK: What do you remember about your school years at Pepe'ekeo?

MU: School year? What did I remember about what?

MK: What about your teachers? What kind of teachers did you have at Pepe'ekeo?

MU: I know the last time I left there, a couple years before, we had a lot of young Japanese girls, Japanese ladies. I remember Miss Fukuda, young, from Normal School here, came down there. And so some Pepe'ekeo grown-up guys, they go up the cottage and they play. And one of them got married to Pepe'ekeo ball player. Nagai. They were young teachers. They all stayed in a cottage, teachers' cottage, right next to the school.

MK: And then before the Japanese ones came, what kind of teachers did you have?

MU: Japanese[-language] school was right next to the English[-language] school, see. When you finish English[-language] school, then we go to Japanese[-language] school, right next door. Our principal then was Mr. Yamada. My days was Mr. Yamada. A pretty strict teacher, that's how we learned little bit.

WN: Now, before the young Japanese teachers came to the Pepe'ekeo School to teach—the English[-language] school—like what kind teachers did you folks have?

MU: We had plenty *Haole* girls from the Mainland. Of course, after that, students increase so they had to bring in some more teachers. We had, let me see, maybe about ten teachers or more, I think.

MK: And then your classrooms, how big were they? How many students in a class?

MU: Plenty. We had about, at least twenty students (in one class).

MK: Were there more than one class, per grade?

MU: *Chee*, that, I don't remember too good. School is a pretty big school. I don't know how many classes were there, I'm not sure.

WN: Was different nationalities?

MU: Yeah. We used to have one Hawaiian—what do you call it?—teacher or (someone) teach us Hawaiian songs once a week, Mr. Naope. Big Hawaiian. He come down once a week teach us Hawaiian song.

MK: What did you think of school back in those days when you were a kid? What did you think about going to school?

MU: Me, I didn't care much about going to school (chuckles). I was a play boy from kid time. I used to like sports. That's all I do. That's why I'm stupid (chuckles), never learn.

(Laughter)

WN: You like Japanese[-language] school or English[-language] school better?

MU: Same. But Japanese[-language] school, the teacher give you a lot of homework and tests every week, written test, and every week they call it *hanashi-kata*, you go speak. We tell

a story. Our teacher was pretty strict, Mr. Yamada. Of course, was good teachers, really good. Those days, the teachers not free. You pay tuition by the family, not by individual. I think our family, whole family, was four dollars or five dollars a month or something like that. The whole family, they go by family, you go Japanese[-language] school, but English[-language] school was free. Yeah, we used to pay money to go Japanese[-language] school. Honolulu same thing, yeah? I went to McCully Japanese[-language] School. You know, pay. Pay for nothing, nobody study. Really, yeah? Hard-earned money.

MK: What were your parents' attitude toward schooling? Did they tell you folks, "Masaji, you go school. You better study hard." Or did they not . . .

MU: My parents never give us pressure. But I remember my father no more education. So nighttime when you take report card and we show the report card, he says "You [get] good grade?" [I] pretend, you know. I so happy, make believe, I guess, those days (chuckles).

MK: And then, you mentioned that you liked to play a lot in school, you liked your sports. In those days at Pepe'ekeo, was there a chance to play ball and everything?

MU: Oh yeah. Baseball, I was pretty good in baseball, sports, everything. We practiced in horse pasture. No more grass in the pasture—big pasture, no more grass—but we pick some level place, play ball over there. Then, if we have a game with another district, like Onomea against Pepe'ekeo, we go to Pepe'ekeo school grounds. We walk another three miles to play baseball. *Chee*, those days, three miles. Every time we walk three miles, I wouldn't walk three miles (now).

WN: You're barefooted, too, I bet.

MU: Barefooted. No more shoes.

MK: Those days, you folks had the equipment to play?

MU: Oh yeah, we had equipment.

MK: And then you mentioned that sometimes a different district would compete with each other, Onomea, Pepe'ekeo.

MU: Andrade Camp, Pepe'ekeo, Kawainui, Maukaloa, we played each other just for the fun of it.

WN: Oh, so all within the same plantation.

MU: Same plantation.

WN: You didn't go to different plantations?

MU: The grown-ups, they had their own league, like Onomea, Hakalau, Pepe'ekeo that's all the stars. The grown ups, that's the Pepe'ekeo team, skin ball team. All the good players, they (go) challenge the other (teams).

MK: In those days, besides their working, what did your parents and other adults do in Pepe'ekeo?

MU: We had Sunday school. We had one Christian church, Buddhist church, but we used to go both because two sides give candy, see. One place give ice cream and one place they give soda. Just for that, we go to Christian church and Buddhist church.

(Laughter)

Kid days, yeah?

WN: What were your parents members of?

MU: My parents were Buddhist, but when we came Honolulu—my kids going to Pentecostal Christian church, so I guess we joined them. Us original Buddhists, all Japanese, but those kids all Christian, so we joined them.

MK: When you folks were kids, did you folks do like *Bon* dance?

MU: Yeah, *Bon* dance at the camp. Had *Bon* dance.

MK: In those days, what was the *Bon* dance like?

MU: Just like now. Japanese dance, and we had Okinawan dance, too. Same thing like they have over here, Okinawan dance, *Bon* dance.

WN: You mean the Japanese and the Okinawans would dance at the same *Bon* dance?

MU: Yeah, Okinawan dance and Japanese dance.

MK: And in those days, was there food like nowadays? Nowadays they have food, yeah?

MU: *Chee*, I don't remember. I don't think so, only dance.

MK: And since a lot of this interview is going to be about restaurants, when you were a kid in Pepe'ekeo, did anybody come around selling food? Like prepared food?

MU: Yeah, from Honomū. A fella named Ishigo, he used to come and sell *manjū*, ice cream. I don't know how many times a week, but he used to come in the wagon. Pepe'ekeo, the houses were built in four lanes. One lane and (another) lane and we had a road in the center, so whoever comes, want to sell ice cream, they come right there, toot their horn, ring bell, they all go out and buy. He sell ice cream.

MK: So the Ishigo *manjū* man would come?

MU: Yeah, I think it's still in the business, yeah? Ishigo?

WN: Oh, yeah?

MK: Yeah.

MU: They used to come with the wagon.

MK: Did anybody else come to sell food?

MU: Yeah. (They) used to come, [sell] billy goat—I think I remember some pig, too—but a lot of time billy goat. Put full of billy goat in the truck and come down there, (we) buy. My father used to buy billy goat.

WN: Oh you mean, cut?

MU: The live one.

WN: Live one?

MK: Live goat?

MU: And later on, they kill 'em.

MK: Oh.

WN: So they would buy the whole billy goat?

MU: The whole billy goat.

WN: Pig, too?

MU: Yeah, pig, too, but they all had pigs, so the only thing they were buying is billy goat.

MK: How about fish?

MU: Fish, too, they used to come sell fish. *Sakana-san* (fish man), yeah.

MK: I don't know what kind of town Pepe'ekeo had, but in those days, were there eating places in Pepe'ekeo?

MU: No, only one small store in each camp. And just had two camps. You know, they sell minor things. Small items. Maukaloa, like us, I don't know. I think we had one candy store. Andrade Camp had two stores—Sakai and. . . Yeah, had two stores. Pepe'ekeo maybe had more, Kawainui had (one). And one of the daughters, Kazuhisa, Judge Kazuhisa [Abe] married one of the daughters (of the store). We all (went) to the same school, Kawainui—I think, Onomea, Kawainui, Pepe'ekeo used to be the same English[-language] school, but the Japanese[-language] school, Onomea had their own. Us guys, Pepe'ekeo only. I think Onomea (teacher was Mr.) Koike. You remember Masa Koike? His father, principal, Japanese[-language] school.

WN: And then later on he was McCully, yeah?

MU: I don't know.

WN: So then, the Onomea kids after they go Pepe'ekeo School, they had to walk back to Onomea for their Japanese[-language] school?

MU: In (that) camp they (had) Japanese[-language] school. They live in Onomea so they go there to their own Japanese[-language] school. After English[-language] school, we go to Japanese school. Some days when we walk home, (it's) almost dark already (chuckles).

WN: So Maukaloa was considered a smaller camp?

- MU: I wonder. Could be a little smaller than Andrade Camp.
- WN: Andrade was the big one?
- MU: And then Mill Camp was the biggest. Times Super[market], the wife used to live in Andrade Camp.
- MK: That's Mrs. (Ethel) Wallace Teruya.
- MU: Wally's wife. Yeah, they all Andrade Camp. I think Wally is from Hakalau, yeah?
- WN: I think so.
- MU: I don't think they went to Pepe'ekeo. Hakalau, I think.
- WN: I'm wondering, did the *Naichi* and the Okinawans get along in those days when you were growing up?
- MU: *Chee*, we used to get along until we came Honolulu. Like Pepe'ekeo, everybody, they really get along good. But when we came Honolulu, it's a different story. Japanese, they didn't like Okinawans (chuckles). I don't know why, but yeah.
- MK: In Pepe'ekeo . . .
- MU: Pepe'ekeo was, everybody got along. In fact, when we came Honolulu, we had two-bedroom house on John 'Ena Road. We had nine kids in my family, eleven in the family with my father and mother. But when people from Maukaloa, when they go to Japan, they don't stay hotel, they stay at my house. They sleep all over the place. (MK and WN chuckle.) Really, you know. Big family, I don't know why. The Ishida family, one of the daughters got married to Richard Kageyama.
- WN: Oh, the councilman?
- MK: The councilman, Richard.
- MU: Yeah, one of the daughters. I don't know, those days, they tried to save money, I guess. They don't want to stay in hotel. Cost money, yeah? They just pile in my house, sleeping (everywhere) (chuckles).
- MK: I know that last time you were telling us that like your mom used to be this great organizer, she's out there organizing things. In Maukaloa, was your mom like that, too?
- MU: I don't remember, I was a kid those days. I don't know much about that. I don't know what happened. When we came Honolulu, she was the one. Weddings, birthday party, big party. My mother, "You take care the sushi, you take care the fish, you take care the *nishime*." And those days, we didn't have much cooks, no more restaurants, too. No more restaurants to order. From then on, we start going in restaurant business. So we had plenty cooks after that.
- WN: I'm wondering Pepe'ekeo, what did you do to have good fun? Did you get into mischief when you were a kid?
- MU: Mischief?

WN: What did you folks do besides sports? Besides baseball and things like that, what did you folks do as kids?

MU: As I told you, I was rascal so I had a *kodomo no gang* (kid gang), little kids. What I used to do, we get about six or seven guys, the plantation garden right next to my house, you can pick plenty big vegetable garden. We take a little salt and pepper and we go through all the garden. We see the cucumber, pick 'em up. Some carrots, pull 'em up, pick 'em up. But no good, too small we push 'em back, but next day get all dry. They (all) know it's me already, so my mother used to go crazy. She the one to go apologize. *Gomen*, eh?

(Laughter)

That's the only thing we used to do, always steal vegetables. We (steal) the cucumber—right next to [it] is cane field—we go in the field and eat cucumber. We had one grown-up, *taishō* (boss). (He) used to tell us, "You bring chicken, you bring *daikon*." We used to (steal) chicken and make chicken *hekka* in one room. See, the guy used to cook for us.

WN: Open fire? Where did he cook?

MU: No.

WN: Oh, at home?

MU: Yeah. This Enoki, I never forget that guy. Japan guy, he (came) from Japan. Rascal boy. He tell us, "Do this, do that." He's a *taishō*, we gotta do. Steal this from the garden, he make chicken *hekka*. Those were good fun days (chuckles).

WN: This garden was run by the plantation?

MU: Yeah, they gave us a garden, they gave us a lot [if] you want to raise vegetables. Nice garden. Big garden, everybody have their portion.

WN: Oh.

MU: So we go there, afternoon, everybody.

WN: So, you wouldn't steal from your parents.

MU: No, we steal from all our neighbors.

(Laughter)

We go around, we see cucumber, nice cucumber, steal (laughs). I was rascal, anyway.

WN: When you say you rascal, what about your other brothers, were they rascal, too, or was it only you?

MU: I think only me, though.

WN: When you compare Sam [Mu's older brother] to you, for example.

MU: I was the one. My other brothers, they wasn't rascal, only me (chuckles). Number one no-good boy.

- MK: In those days you were saying you had *Naichi*, *Uchinanchu*, and later on, Filipinos came on. When you look at the gardens, were the gardens different if you were *Naichi* or *Uchinanchu*? Different kind of vegetables?
- MU: No, I think everybody grow their own, see. Everybody grow their own carrots, lettuce, cucumber. Everybody grow their own.
- MK: So, no difference? About the same kind?
- MU: And those days, like Maukaloa, it rain like anything. Oh, the vegetables grow big. Even *tamana*, white cabbage, big and nice ones. Plenty tomatoes. As I say, my older brother went high school Pāpa'ikou. [He sold] tomatoes to the stores, [made] a few bucks. I think at the Andrade Camp (store), I don't remember, I don't think they had vegetable garden. Maukaloa, we had big vegetable garden. Everybody had garden, pigpen, everything.
- MK: Did you folks have more land than the Andrade Camp, more area?
- MU: I think so, we had, because we're in the mountain already, all wide open. Even cane field. Andrade Camp is lower side, but we had all the way until the mountain.
- WN: Were there like rivers around there or streams?
- MU: Oh yeah, fresh water from mountain coming all the way down.
- WN: Did you folks do anything in the streams?
- MU: We used to go swimming and we used to catch small little 'ōpae. We used to stick it on a wire and make fire and eat the 'ōpae. We used to go up the mountain pick *pohā*, we used to call it "*poka*."
- WN: What is that?
- MK: It's sort of like a *liliko'i*.
- MU: *Liliko'i*, we call it "*poka* blue." Not yellow skin, the blue one, yeah?
- WN: Purple.
- MU: Purple, yeah. Good, we used to go up the mountain.
- MK: So a lot of things to do then, yeah?
- WN: What about the flumes, did you guys ride the flumes?
- MU: Yeah. Slide, yeah. Because when you see Maukaloa it's way high compared to (the other camps). We can ride down, way down from (up on) the flume, we come (home), sliding down.
- WN: You go head first or . . . ?
- MU: No, feet only. Sometimes we used to get cane. Put the cane (under and ride).
- WN: Oh, you used to stand up and ride?

MU: Danger, no? Think about it, danger you know. You grab the flume side, you get this what do you call it? From lumber you get all these (splinters).

WN: Splinters. So you'd be standing up on a piece of cane . . .

MU: Yeah, go down.

WN: You riding on the ridge like the wooden side? Wow. How long would one ride be?

MU: *Chee*, pretty long, though. We used to do that when we go to mountain, go in the mountain and pick *poka*. On the way home, we put a bag of the *poka* in the flume, too, let 'em go all the way down. Instead of (carrying), put 'em in the flume, let 'em go down and we follow. Slide down.

(Laughter)

WN: How did you stop?

MU: Come level place, too, get some level place. I remember one time at Maukaloa, on the side of the road, water flow all the way. My kid brother, Johnny, kid time he fell down (into) the ditch and went all the way down. But those days, (they had a pipe laid across the ditch). They put a stopper there so anybody go down they stop right over there. It was dangerous. Otherwise, you go all the way down to the mill.

(Laughter)

WN: And how far away was the mill from Maukaloa?

MU: It's about three miles.

WN: Three miles, wow. Was the town and the school and the mill, were they nearby?

MU: What town?

WN: Was there like a Pepe'ekeo town with plantation store and things like that, were they all at the same place?

MU: Let me see. Break for a little while.

WN: I going turn this off right now.

(Taping stops, then resumes).

MK: So, Mr. Uyehara, you just drew a map for us. So Pepe'ekeo town had the school, the Japanese school, the hospital. . . .

MU: No, no. Pepe'ekeo is (a big camp) where people stay. School is here—this is the main highway—school is here. And hospital is here, Pepe'ekeo hospital. And if you go straight it's Honomū and you go to Honoka'a side. So, right on this corner is plantation store, the Pepe'ekeo plantation store. From here, we go all (go home) through the cane field road.

WN: So straight down from Maukaloa down the flume is three miles? If you went straight down on the flume it's three miles?

MU: I think so. About.

WN: Wow, that's a long way.

MU: Maukaloa is way up. (Near) the mountain.

MK: And then you were saying the road from Maukaloa down to that area is not tar road.

MU: From here, no more tar road.

WN: Dirt road.

MU: Not dirt road, was a (rock road). And those days, we walked barefoot, yeah? Sometimes you kick (a rock and) lose your toenail (plenty) times. (Chuckles)

MK: Aw. So in those days, was there any transportation that came up to Maukaloa?

MU: No. Those days, funny, you know. They had trucks, Pepe'ekeo, plenty trucks. Sometimes they pick up the laborers and they come way up Maukaloa to work. Like us, you remember Oki Shikina used to be a wrestler? He was one of the truck drivers, too. He (drove) a truck. So, at Pepe'ekeo, when you say Maukaloa, this is the camp. Get one church here, we used to get together at the church. Everybody get together at the church (at 6:00 A.M.) and then we line up and walk down to school. So, we all go to school together. When the truck go up, all the girls go out, stay one place, and then when they see the girls, they stop the truck and pick the girls up. We (boys hide), eh? Come up [later] and ride on the truck.

(Laughter)

WN: They didn't know you guys were on the truck, too?

MU: This guys, *wahines*, they pick 'em up. Men, they no pick 'em up, so we used to fool them. But, after I came to Honolulu, they start giving trucks, trucks taking them to school and taking them home. You know, (they) had plenty trucks. But those days, they never give us a ride—walk.

WN: What about things like *furo*. Was there *furo*?

MU: Yeah, *furo*, (we bathe) all together. One big *furo*, divide it in half.

WN: For Maukaloa? Yeah.

MU: This is woman and man. Big *furo*, though. Really. About, *chee* . . .

WN: Size of this room?

MU: No, no, about something like ten-by-ten feet.

WN: Usually how many of you were in . . .

MU: Plenty guys can go. Plenty guys.

WN: Like ten?

MU: Yeah, ten can go easy, those days.

WN: And then how was it divided between the boys and girls?

MU: Lumber. No more *puka*, no more hole.

(Laughter)

WN: You guys couldn't swim underwater?

MU: No can. They were together, but different sections.

MK: And then was there a family or somebody who took care of the *furoya*?

MU: I think they used to bid for that. They getting paid to make the *furo*. Every day you (have) to make the *furo*, and they got to wash the *furo*. They getting paid, so yeah, a family used to take care, certain family.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MU: . . . and one Filipino came in, us guys all together with Filipinos, too, you know. Those days, when you go in the *furo*, you got to wash first before you go inside. Filipinos come in there, we used to get a little bit trouble every time. They just jump in the *furo*, but later on, became all right, take bath together.

WN: They had to learn the custom, too.

MU: Filipino style, I remember we used to go visit guys, (they) used to eat everything with (their) fingers.

MK: So when the Filipinos came in, did they live in a bachelors' rooming house?

MU: Yeah. Same. When there's an opening, they get a house. They stay in individual house, too. Maybe one cottage about ten people, Filipinos. They all live together, but no wife. They didn't bring wife, only men came in, young men.

MK: So who cooked for them, do their laundry?

MU: They do themselves.

WN: Now, you folks' house had eight children?

MU: Nine.

WN: Nine children. And two-bedroom house at Maukaloa?

MU: *Chee*, I really don't remember, either two or three. I don't know.

WN: I'm just wondering how you folks . . .

- MU: Get big living room, too, you can sleep in the living room. Pretty big house, nice house. They built us a good house. Nice house.
- WN: What was mealtime like with nine kids? Eleven of you in that house.
- MU: (Chuckles) Well, my mother was a cook.
- WN: Did you all eat together?
- MU: Eat together, not like nowadays. Nowadays, they (eat all different time), before, you all eat together.
- MK: What kinds of foods did your mom make?
- MU: Mostly vegetables, vegetables with chicken. You know, amazing, before, you kill pig or chicken, no more icebox. How they keep meat and things like that? They salt 'em up, yeah? Amazing. Nowadays, (you have) icebox [refrigerator]. Before, no more icebox.
- MK: So everything you folks just put it in the safe?
- MU: I don't know. Terrific, yeah, those days.
- MK: Because your family is so big, you have nine kids, what kind of chores did the kids have?
- MU: I don't remember, but I think they had their own certain things to do, especially girls. Boys, they play, but only the girls work. (MK laughs.) But, it's a good thing the girls are a little bit older than us, okay. I think my two sisters, they work hard though. Of course, even when I was twelve years old, I work in the cane field, twenty-five cents a day—summertime. And then during the other days, we had four acres of cane field, and my father after coming home from plantation work, he come home about four o'clock, walk right to the cane field *hō hana*, four acres. He never hired nobody; he did everything by himself. Once in a while he take us. Those days, when you say "*hō hana*" you hoe the grass. Nowadays, they don't do that, they put poison, kill everything. Our days, *hō hana*, do all the grass. You know *holehole*, dry leaves. Nowadays, they don't do that, they just burn the cane field. Our days, *holehole*. Oh, you get cuts on the hand. We worked pretty hard though.
- WN: How did he irrigate his field?
- MU: Irrigate? No need, plenty rain over there. No need. Too much rain, those days. I don't know now but even when we went to school we had to carry raincoat with us, *kappa*, to school because rain almost every day. So, imagine, you carry school bag, raincoat, and walk to school.
- MK: How about school lunch, your *bentō*?
- MU: School lunch, just like peanut butter and jelly.
- WN: Your mother made? Oh, no? At school, you mean?
- MU: We used to make our own jelly, my mother, with the guava. My mother used to make guava jelly, too.

MK: You folks used to take sandwich?

MU: I guess so, I don't remember much. Those days, five cents, ten cents, oh. Five cents, you can buy a loaf of bread, yeah. Amazing. Even Honolulu when we opened the business here, I think the bread about that price, huh? Seven cents, loaf of bread. We sell sandwich for fifteen cents, restaurant, yeah.

WN: So you said that twelve years old you worked in the cane field, was it your father's cane field or was it the plantation?

MU: Plantation (for twenty-five cents a day).

WN: Okay. You worked two times, you worked for the plantation and your father.

MU: My father was (for) summertime (only and Sundays sometime).

WN: What did you do out in the cane field for the plantation, what kind jobs?

MU: *Hō hana*.

WN: Oh, *hō hana*.

MU: All the kids, grown-ups, older guys, they *hō hana*, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

MU: Us guys, kids, two guys on one side (of the line canefield) so we can keep up. You twelve years old only.

WN: And you got paid how much?

MU: Twenty-five cents, one day, (about nine or ten hours a day).

MK: And those days, who was your *luna* when you went out summertime?

MU: Oh, Japanese, old people.

MK: How was the *luna* with you folks?

MU: It was all right. Well, he got to produce, otherwise he going to lose his job. The big *luna* comes (around) with the horse and check (every time). If you don't produce, he might get demoted, so he got to push. He don't push us too much, but we got to work, otherwise he's going to lose his job. We get one water boy. Water boy goes to the river, get the water, fresh water. He carry—get two buckets—he carry and come feed us water. Now and then he come around.

WN: In like a tin cup?

MU: Yeah. Those were the days, boy, plantation days.

WN: The twenty-five cents you made a day, what did you do with the twenty-five cents?

- MU: Like my house, as I remember, even when we came Honolulu to work, we used to give all the money to Mother. Even Honolulu, same thing, when I worked, [when] all my sisters [worked], all the money goes to my mother. My mother used to make savings for us, International Savings [and Loan Association]. So much, she put all under our name. So when we grow up and we got married we got the money. My mother was smart. I had a good mother. No more education, but very smart. Make all the savings for us.
- MK: So she didn't use the money for the family support?
- MU: Yeah, but whatever's left over, make savings for us.
- MK: How about *kozukai*, spending money?
- MU: Never heard of spending money. Spending money, for what?
- WN: What about movies, did you folks go movies?
- MU: Maukaloa? Yeah. We didn't go, but they used to come down. What do you call it, *benshi* kind (chuckles)? Old samurai picture, the *benshi* talking (at) the side.
- WN: Used to be inside or outside, the movie?
- MU: Inside. Plantation (built) a clubhouse (for us). Everybody can use for certain occasions. Get movie, but you got to pay. Our family pay so much to go (movie).
- WN: Had American movies, too?
- MU: I don't remember. I don't think so. I don't remember seeing American movie because those days all old people, mostly they don't talk English, our family. All mostly for the family, for the old people.
- MK: So the Japanese *benshi* came up, showed the Japanese movie, and the kids and the parents, you folks all went?
- MU: Yeah, we used to go. Because we used to go Japanese[-language] School, so those days all the guys understand Japanese. So they all, everybody went to Japanese[-language] school. I went to school, *chūgaku yonen*, until ninth grade. I continued to Honolulu at McCully Japanese School. I wasn't smart, but I learned how to talk Japanese (chuckles).
- WN: Should we get into Honolulu?
- MK: Yeah. You said, 1929 the family moved to Honolulu.
- MU: Yeah. Mm-hmm.
- MK: How come?
- MU: Well, as my brother said, getting tired of working plantation. I don't know, maybe they were thinking about the kids. They figure they don't want their kids to go through the hardship, work in the cane field. They want, maybe, a better life, so we came Honolulu.
- MK: How did they manage to—you know, you're bringing a big family Honolulu, how did they pay for all that?

MU: Well you see, my brother [Sam Uyehara] came earlier, and he was a carpenter. So when we came over, he had the house all ready for us. We came over here, I think we stayed in Pāwa'a or someplace and from there we moved to John 'Ena.

WN: Makanoë Lane?

MU: Yeah, that's where my brother made the house. Stayed there for about fifteen years. Ten dollars a month, we paid. You saw our house, yeah?

WN: The picture, yeah.

MU: My brother and (his friend) carpenters (built) the house. Magoon Estate.

MK: What was that area like in those days, Makanoë Lane area?

MU: As you go to the Makanoë Lane, all Japanese camp, and then when you go further in, the road come right out to Ala Wai. You know Ala Wai Bridge, Ala Wai Canal?

MK: Yeah.

MU: The road come right outside there.

WN: You mean the McCully Street bridge?

MU: Makanoë Lane, you see . . .

MK: Comes all the way out to the Ala Wai.

WN: Yeah, yeah. Okay.

MU: That was a Hawaiian camp. Makanoë Lane, this is Kalākaua Avenue. This is Waikīkī. This is John 'Ena Road. Makanoë Lane was coming this way, Japanese camp here, and then here was the Hawaiian camp. All the Hawaiians live here. The road goes from here and goes straight out to Kalākaua Avenue. And this is the bridge here, that bridge, the Ala Wai Canal. Now, no more Makanoë Lane. They build a high-rise over there.

WN: So Makanoë Lane was off John 'Ena Road and ended up at Kalākaua near the, across the street, bridge.

MU: Right. Hawaiian camp, nice Hawaiians. All the beach boys used to live over there. Hawaiians are really nice people, they happy-go-lucky (chuckles).

WN: I wanted to ask you, coming from a real country place, Pepe'ekeo, to Waikīkī, Honolulu. What was it like for you? Do you remember how you felt, was it a big change for you?

MU: Didn't excite me much, I think. I don't know.

(Laughter)

WN: Wasn't it . . . ?

MU: No.

- WN: Oh, yeah? You real adaptable, huh? (Chuckles)
- MU: I was twelve years old. I wasn't too excited (chuckles).
- MK: And you mention this Japanese camp, what kind of camp was it? You have how many houses and what kind . . . ?
- MU: Houses all over the place. Their own house. Magoon used to own the whole place, Magoon Estate. Eventually, they chase all the Hawaiians out, too, Japanese out, put a high-rise in there now.
- MK: Last time you mentioned Toma.
- MU: Toma-san worked for Magoon. Never actually—well, he was assigned as the camp boss. He ran the company over there, everything go through him. He was a fisherman, he lived right next to our house. Single man, fisherman. So he used to take me, too. We go fishing. He's a good fisherman. We go down there, lay net. Those days, no more 'Ilikai [Hotel], never (had) . . . One time had a hospital over there. Kaiser Hospital?
- WN: Yeah.
- MK: Kaiser Hospital.
- MU: Over there, only beach. We used to go out there. He had his own little wagon, we put all the nets in (his wagon), go across, go to the beach, go lay net, throw net. He's a good fisherman.
- MK: And then, that Japanese camp (now) he was like the boss of, what kind of work were most of the other Japanese families over there doing? Waikīkī, yeah?
- MU: They were working in Waikīkī. I know a lot of guys, Waikīkī, they work in the hotel. Like that, you interviewed, that's the wife, what's the name? [Margaret] (Umeno Takara) [Uyehara] house was over here. Keikyu (Takara), right over here, this corner.
- WN: So most of the families in Japanese camp, did they work for the hotels?
- MU: All over, yeah. Even my, sister, my sister worked in hotel, too. Hale Nani Hotel in Alapa'i, I think (I) work over there, (too). And my father was the greenskeeper at O'ahu Country Club. My brother was working as a carpenter. He was already a carpenter. Of course, part time, since carpenter job was getting less, slow those days, depression, that's where he learned how to cook, was going to the restaurant. Hibiscus Café, American Café, learn how to cook.
- MK: So Sam learned at Hibiscus [Café] and American Café?
- MU: Yeah. Just go there part time, you know, because that's all our friends.
- MK: How did you folks know the owners of Hibiscus Café and American Café?
- MU: Oh, relatives, Oroku. In fact, the owner of Hibiscus Café, American Café, when they first came here, they went to Hilo, Waiākea, they work as *kompang* (partners), cane field. So my mother was a cook, and my mother did everything (for them) when they first came

from Okinawa. They came Honolulu early, and they're all good friends. They all help each other.

MK: The American Café owner was Ushi Takara, and Hibiscus Café owner was. . . .

MU: Saburo Teruya.

MK: Teruya. And, your family knew them because of. . . .

MU: Well, before, being Oroku, anyway, see. They're *Orokun-chu*. And then when they came Hawai'i, they work in the cane field, and then they all work together. They call it — *Kompang*, you know, *Kompang*, plantation (partners). Of course, my mother was the one taking care of the laundry, the cooking, and (did) everything.

MK: So, your mother knew them in Waiākea side?

MU: Yeah.

MK: So, goes way back then, the connection?

MU: Yeah. All original. That's how it starts. I don't know how, what made them come to Honolulu and open a restaurant. I give (them) a lot of credit. That's why I told Howard [Takara], "You know, these guys, these two people—American Café, Hibiscus Café—I think we should give them certificate of appreciation." Those guys the beginners of Oroku restaurants and everything. From them on, we get fifty (or more) restaurants, through them. Because my brother learned from Hibiscus Café. (They) opened Bert's Café, Ramona Café. They all worked for (us). But originally, from Hibiscus Café. They all work for (us), and they open a restaurant. But the beginning was Hibiscus Café, American Café. Really, they deserve some kind of a, I say, appreciation certificate. To me, they should give them.

MK: Have you ever heard anything about how Ushi Takara and Saburo Teruya learned? How did they learn?

MU: That, I don't know, really. I don't know who knows about—because when we came Honolulu, they had the restaurant already. When I was twelve years old, they had restaurant already.

MK: So when your family moved over here, your brother's working as a carpenter, and when the carpentry business is getting kind of slow, he's working at the restaurants. Then your father's working O'ahu Country Club, he's a greenskeeper. How about your mother?

MU: My mother, plenty jobs at home. Plenty, washing clothes for the kids, cooking for them, she had enough jobs (chuckles).

MK: And then your sisters, your older sisters?

MU: My sisters, they were all working.

MK: Where were they working?

- MU: I remember, my oldest one was working at a hotel as a maid. I don't know what my other sister was doing. And of course, after we built the Smile Café, then my two sisters, Tomiko and Mi-*chan* as a waitress there.
- MK: And then, you know, at Pepe'ekeo you folks had pigs, you folks had chicken, you folks had vegetables. At Makanoe Lane . . .
- MU: No more nothing. You got to buy everything (here), you know.
- WN: Big change then.
- MU: Really. You living plantation is better. You don't think so? Everything is free. You don't get fish, but otherwise—actually, (little fish only), you live in the country.
- MK: So, when you folks lived Makanoe Lane, you're only twelve years old, you're going junior high and everything, but did you have a feeling if life was harder for your family or better over there?
- MU: Those days, I never thought of anything, a kid (chuckles), huh? I didn't think about future. Just live day by day. Of course, when you get little older, you think about it.
- MK: How did your Makanoe house compare with your Pepe'ekeo house?
- MU: Well, Pepe'ekeo house was new house, a nice house, too. The house that we built in Makanoe Lane was, let me see, bigger house. We had two bedrooms downstairs and I think three bedrooms upstairs. Big house. Big living room, too, upstairs. Downstairs, too, of course. It's a big house.
- WN: Wow. Sam built that house?
- MU: Yeah.
- MK: So in those days, Sam could build a house on the Magoon property. He's renting the . . .
- MU: (We) lease for ten dollars a month (for fifteen years).
- MK: You lease the land.
- MU: Ten dollars a month. That's cheap, yeah? For fifteen years we stayed there.
- WN: Did you folks do things together as a community, Japanese camp in Makanoe Lane?
- MU: Over there, let me see. I don't think so. Those days, I guess they're all grown up, they're busy making money.
- WN: Plus you were older, too. You folks weren't kids.
- MU: Like me, I used to play music and go out, but I miss my good time. Because my primetime, war. You see? When I was twenty-three, war started. I got married when I was twenty-six. When I was twenty-seven, the war ended.

MK: So when you folks first moved to Makanoe, you started at Washington Junior High. How was that for you? You came from small place, you went Pepe'ekeo School, now you're in Waikiki and you going Washington Junior High. What did you think about that?

MU: Nothing.

MK: You just went.

MU: I guess so. Went to school because you have to go. I just went to school, I never study. (Laughs)

WN: I know you said that when you were going to school in Pepe'ekeo there were no problems between *Uchinanchu* and *Naichi*. When you came Honolulu, was there anything at school?

MU: No. Not everybody, but in front of us was nice, Aoki family. [But] we had couple families used to treat us rough, two families.

WN: I'm wondering if they were from plantation originally, or . . .

MU: No, they're from Honolulu. Those days, I don't know. Some Japanese people, they're not even civilized maybe, they don't know nothing.

MK: At Makanoe camp were there other Okinawan families?

MU: Yeah. Okinawans and Japanese about half and half.

MK: And then the other *Uchinanchu*, were they from Oroku, too, or other places?

MU: Other places. We had a few Orokus.

MK: And then you were telling us that when you used to go school at Pepe'ekeo, you used to walk three miles. How did you go Washington?

MU: Walk.

MK: You walked.

MU: Near, yeah.

WN: Not three miles (chuckles).

MU: A little over a mile.

MK: So not that bad, yeah.

MU: *Chee*, when I went to Washington, I wonder if I had shoes. I don't think so. Barefoot, was I barefoot? I think so, everybody—I think nobody had shoes. Only private school, they wear necktie, but us guys, public school, I don't think we had shoes on. I don't think so.

MK: Because you came from Pepe'ekeo, how did you adjust? Any adjustment?

MU: I didn't have any adjustments. I don't think so.

WN: And you went Washington Intermediate, and you went McCully Japanese School.

MU: Yeah.

WN: Was Mr. Koike back at McCully by that time?

MU: No. First schoolteacher was, I think, Mr. Hayashi, Japanese[-language] school. I think Koike came in afterwards. I think Koike came way after. I know Masa, those guys from Onomea, those days. Masa Koike, and the brother.

MK: You were telling us that the *sensei* at Pepe'ekeo was kind of strict, so you learned — something over there. How about at McCully?

(Laughter)

MU: Wasn't too strict. We only played and go. We learned—I don't think I learned much over here, I think I learned more in Pepe'ekeo.

MK: In those days, when you were going Washington and you going McCully Japanese School, when you were not in school, what were you doing for fun?

MU: Oh, for fun. Well, I'd say we go fishing. I used to like fishing. We used to swim by the canal, we used to swim across because right there. We used to fish under the (bridge), fish *āholehole*, small. Plenty *āholehole* those days. Of course, I used to like sports. I played a lot of baseball. I play (kid) football with the Hawaiians.

MK: And that time, were you doing any music?

MU: Yeah.

MK: You were already?

MU: Let's see. How old? Nineteen thirty-two, I was pretty young, though.

WN: You were about sixteen, 1932.

MU: I was really young.

MK: Last time you mentioned that you had some jobs before you worked at Smile Café. You were a chauffeur for Robert Carter.

MU: Robert Carter, Jr., the ex-governor's son. Then he got me another job (at) [Joseph] Platt Cooke, the Cooke family, A&B [Alexander & Baldwin]. He was the vice-president over there. Same kind of job, take the kids to school. Sometime, I'd like to meet those kids. They were about ten years old. I think they must be about sixty, seventy years old now. I used to take them to Punahou School, drive them, you know kids.

MK: How did you learn to drive?

MU: I took my driver license with a Model-T. You know Model-T?

(Laughter)

They took me up Punchbowl, the Heights over there, you got to stop the car in the middle of the (street). It's hard to maneuver your car. (Chuckles). Yeah, I took my license (with) the Model-T. We had Model-T at home. (Later) we bought a '29, Model-A, but I took license with Model-T (Ford).

WN: What kind of car did Governor Carter's son have?

MU: Oh, she had a big Buick. (His) wife was Chu Baldwin family. She was good lady, nice lady.

MK: How did you get this job with the Carter family?

MU: Through a man that used to live at the Makano'e camp. He was a chauffeur for the father when they had a mansion in Nu'uano, Governor Carter. Then they moved to Kāhala and he became a house boy. So, I went to be a chauffeur. So chauffeur, help yard once in a while, clean the house a little bit. Then, I got the same job at Cooke's place. Cooke's place I had a little more responsibility. I had to serve them breakfast, lunch, dinner, with a white coat. How you like that?

MK: And you lived over there?

MU: No, I didn't live. I had my own room. They gave us a room. We had a cook, yard boy, housemaid, me. They all had a small room for themselves. Actually, I walked back and forth up to Kewalo Street.

WN: Was the Cooke's house near the Carter house?

MU: Cooke's house? No, Cookes is Ke'eumoku.

WN: J.P. Cooke?

MU: Yeah, Ke'eumoku Street. Way up Ke'eumoku.

WN: The Carters was at Black Point?

MU: Black Point, they call it Kaiko'o. Right next to Richard Smart's place. You know Richard Smart has a beach home over there? On the Kāhala side, near Black Point side. Big, big places, alongside of the ocean.

MK: When you worked as like a chauffeur for Robert Carter, you were always on-call, you're just there and whenever they want you.

MU: Yeah. Then when they want to go town, they tell me what time they want to go town. I go there, get ready. They (bought) me a chauffeur cap, black suit. Open the door for missus, (drive) them, "Oh, I'm going to be at Liberty House twenty minutes." So I park my car, wait for about twenty minutes. They tell (me) what they're going to do. Mrs. Carter was a very nice lady. But some chauffeurs get bad time because they don't tell you what they're going to do. You got to look around for them. But Mrs. Carter used to say, "Masa, I'm going to be there certain time. Then from there, Liberty House, I'm going to McInerney's," you know? It was easy for me. Bring them home in the afternoon, go Punahou School, pick the kids up, bring them home.

MK: You know, when you were waiting around for the missus, what do you do?

MU: Nothing.

(Laughter)

Just stand around the sidewalk.

MK: You cannot go *holoholo* then, yeah?

(Laughter)

WN: So when you say “serve them breakfast,” you didn’t cook the breakfast.

MU: No, we had a cook. Me, I’m a house boy. The house maid take care upstairs. Me, downstairs only I take care. When they ready, “Masa, Masaji” take breakfast out.

WN: To the dining table.

MU: When they come home from work, they play tennis. Those days—Damon Estate, Mr. Damon and Mrs. Damon used to come play tennis. “Masa, two cocktails!” I make cocktail and I serve them. That was really serving, eh? But, was okay with me. As I say, I quit because I cannot be working every weekend, I wanted to play ball. Because every weekend I have to take yard boy, the cook, the maid, go do down Waimānalo, beach home. I (drove) the big car, pack all the stuff, go there. They had a beach home. Serve them. I told them, “Eh, this is not my life, boy, I got to play ball. I’m young yet.” So I say, “I’m going to quit.” In the meantime, I wonder if we had Smile Café that time?

WN: According to us, we have 1932 the start of Smile.

MU: Oh, yeah. I think we had, yeah.

WN: So you were working two places?

MK: Helped out.

WN: Maybe we can do that next time, yeah?

MU: I couldn’t work outside, dining room, because you got to be age, when you get liquor over there. I was working outside other places.

MK: I was wondering, how much did they pay you for chauffeur, house boy work?

MU: Twelve dollars a week (long hours), I remember. And that was supposed to be pretty good pay. The cooks were getting ten dollars a week, I remember. Those days, (in) Kāhala, every (home), every family had a maid, ten dollars a week. They sleep over there, but nowadays, you don’t see maids no more. They cannot hire already (chuckles). Got to be ten dollars an hour. (Chuckles) Yeah? I think.

MK: The people that worked for Governor Carter, were they *Orokun[-chu]*, too?

MU: No, all different people. Mostly Japanese though.

MK: Mostly Japanese. You mentioned, like you had to serve the breakfast. If they wanted cocktails you mixed the cocktails and you took it out. I was wondering, what things did

you learn from working at these places that became useful to you later on when you started your restaurant?

MU: I used to iron the tuxedo for mister, the man, take care the tux. When they go out nighttime, I used to iron, (shine his) shoes. Men job, I used to do everything.

MK: How about food things? Did you learn anything?

MU: No, family cooking. I never bother. There's a Japanese lady, family-style cooking.

MK: But you learned how to mix drinks, though.

MU: Oh, simple stuff was easy for me.

WN: Plus, they had the same drinks every day, I bet.

MU: Martini. Gin and martini. I used to know a lot of bigshot ladies. Damon, that lady used to be golfer, too. They used to be nice. Say, "Hey Masa," they called me "Masa, Masa" every time. They're nice. During the night when they have dinner invitation, we go. (Drove) them to dinner. That's where all the chauffeurs meet together. We go in the kitchen, they feed us food. All the different chauffeurs [for the] Dillinghams, Carters, Baldwins. All the different chauffeurs they come down, we meet together. I had a lot of fun.

MK: Were they all young boys like you?

MU: Yeah.

WN: And they all Japanese.

MU: Boys, Japanese. Yeah?

MK: That's a real different life, yeah? When they fed you, when they fed all the chauffeurs . . .

MU: Yeah, we went in the kitchen and we ate. (Nice Japanese girl was a cook.)

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 40-23-2-03

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Masaji Uyehara (MU)

Honolulu, O'ahu

April 10, 2003

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

WN: This is an interview with Masaji Uyehara for the Oroku Restaurant Project on April 10, 2003, and we're at his home in Honolulu, O'ahu. The interviewers are Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto.

MK: So today we're gonna start from 1938. And you were telling us that you were hired as the first Japanese cook at Kau-Kau Korner.

MU: Right. That's where I got my social security card. First social security right over there. Nineteen thirty-eight, yeah.

MK: But, how did you get the job at Kau-Kau Korner?

MU: I don't know. Maybe I read in the paper or something. I don't know. (Laughs) I wasn't a good cook, though. I wasn't a good cook, but that drive-inn was only sandwiches, see, so easy, yeah. But then, I just went in the wrong time. Like we had a six-month longshore[men's] strike, yeah. So no more mayonnaise, no more relish. Boy, good thing I (made) all the mayonnaise and the relish, you know, for the sandwich shop. So the boss, Sonny Sundstrom, he treated me good.

MK: And then who else worked at Kau-Kau Korner in those days?

MU: We had about eight carhops, all *Haole wahines*, yeah. And I had one of my friends. I had my friend that help me, Japanese guy, work with me in the kitchen, help me, yeah.

MK: And then those days, what kind of people used to come to Kau-Kau Korner?

MU: Well, we have *Haole* girls, so mostly *Haoles*, yeah. Young *Haoles*, you know, carhops.

MK: And then where was Kau-Kau Korner located.

MU: That's Kalākaua [Avenue] and Ala Wai [Boulevard]. That corner, yeah. Oh, what restaurant over there now? The rock-and-roll restaurant?

WN: Hard Rock Café.

MU: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Right (at) the corner.

MK: And then like you were saying that it was a bad time because of the strike, yeah? So what happened to you after Kau-Kau Korner?

MU: After Kau-Kau Korner, you know, I wonder if I went. . . . Let me see, before Kau-Kau Korner, I was chauffeur, yeah.

MK: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

MU: So I guess I went back to Smile Café, eh? (Chuckles)

WN: What kind of stuff did you cook at Kau-Kau Korner?

MU: Nothing but sandwiches. They were famous in chili. I used to make all the chili. And sandwiches, all different name. All the Hawaiian names, you know, the sandwiches. I forgot already, long time ago. (Chuckles) No dining room, only had a counter in a little shack, kitchen and counter had about eight chairs, yeah. And all carhops, all car service.

WN: Did you make any *kine* Japanese food?

MU: No. Only sandwich, American food. I used to make pie. I baked pie for them. (Chuckles)

MK: What kind of pies did you make?

MU: Well, all kinds. I used to make all *kine* pies, see. Custard pie, pumpkin pie, apple pie, mince pie, apricot, you know. I used to make all *kine* pie for them. They were happy. So one time Sonny Sundstrom got all the girls together. He told (them), "Hey, you know since Masa"—he called me Masa, see—"since Masa came over here, you girls are getting good tip. He give you good service. So from tonight you girls (will) give [Masa] 20 percent of the tips." So all the girls, after work, they gave me 20 percent tip. And those days 20 percent tip big, you know, 20 cents from a dollar, you know. All the six, (or) seven girls they give me tip. Oh.

(Laughter)

MK: And then you know like you said, you made the pies. How did you know how to make pies?

MU: I guess I learned at Smile Café, I think. Because Smile Café I started there age sixteen, yeah. And actually I was washing dishes, (did) all the janitor work, and help the cooks, you know. So, I guess I must have learned there.

WN: Who were the customers at Kau-Kau Korner?

MU: All the *Haoles*. Mostly young *Haoles*. They come (and) pick up the *Haole* girls, yeah, young *Haole* girls and nice *Haole* girls, young ones, you know (chuckles).

WN: You mean the carhops?

MU: Carhops.

WN: So the *Haole* guys would come?

MU: Oh, plenty.

(Laughter)

MU: They were really busy. That place was really busy.

WN: Did local people come, too?

MU: Yeah. But mostly *Haoles*, yeah. All young guys.

MK: So like in those days, what kind of competition did Kau-Kau Korner have?

MU: Well, had KC Drive-Inn over there, too. KC Drive-Inn. And, gee, when you say drive-inn, I don't remember other places. I think only Kau-Kau Korner. After that Kapi'olani Drive-Inn came, yeah.

MK: And then, you know, you were saying like you think later on you went back to Sam's.

MU: Uh-huh.

MK: But how come you went back to Sam's?

MU: I don't know. Maybe they needed me. (Laughs) Well, when I went back, I think, *chee*, I don't know. Was I twenty years old? Because, see, gotta be twenty to work over there because we serving liquor, yeah.

MK: Oh.

MU: You see.

MK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MU: So I was a waiter, night waiter. Then before the war, I was a bartender. Then wartime I was a bartender.

WN: So you were about twenty-four.

MU: Little bit. Twenty-four, twenty-two, twenty-four, twenties, yeah.

WN: Yeah.

MK: Yeah. So you were old enough, yeah?

MU: Yeah, yeah. So I was bartender. Then when the war break out, second day, I volunteer in the service, yeah, National Guard.

MK: You were telling us that you were like bartender at Sam's.

MU: Mm-hmm.

MK: What kind of people used to come?

MU: All local people. Our place was a sportsman hangout, see. So all those days, University of Hawai'i football players used to be the training table. After practice, they come down Smile Café and they eat. Like Tom [Thomas] Kaulukukui, those guys, you know. Buster Piltz. And they drink, too, you know (chuckles). Come in the bar, drink.

- MK: So those days, what kinds of drinks were popular with the people that came to Sam's?
- MU: What *kine* beer?
- MK: Yeah, what *kine* drinks?
- MU: Oh, beer. All beer. I think draft beer was only ten cents, yeah. Twenty-five cents for the bottled beer.
- WN: Draft beer was what company, mostly?
- MU: *Chee*, I don't remember. Let me see. I don't know what company. But anyway, we had Primo, Royal, you know, local beer.
- WN: What else? Lucky Lager?
- MU: Lucky Lager. And Acme, Rainier. Those days, lot of guys, they don't know about that beer. And Hamm's Beer, Tacoma Beer, oh so many different kinds of beer, yeah, before.
- WN: I didn't know had that many. Tacoma?
- MU: Tacoma Beer. But number one popular one those days was—one year was Acme Beer, then changed to Primo Beer, then Royal Beer, then Olympia Beer was popular for long time, too. One time Lucky Lager was popular, too, you know. Like now, nothing but Bud Light and Miller Lite and Coors, yeah. Our days we had all kind of beers. Hamm's Beer, Kirin, Asahi, Sapporo. (Chuckles)
- MK: And then those days at Smile Café, you were saying it was like a training table. The UH [University of Hawai'i] players used to come, yeah.
- MU: Yeah. After practice, they come down there eat.
- MK: Did girls come down to eat and drink at Smile Café, too?
- MU: Oh, yeah. Everybody come (for) dinner or lunch. You get hamburger steak, maybe soup or cocktail choice, and you get drink for thirty cents. And those days we had most popular guy was like Hitchcock. He became a police chief, yeah. Wayne Sterling, football player. And he became a liquor inspector. Ramon Petrie was golf champion, (she) was going Punahou School. And (her) brother Petrie was a liquor inspector. So after they came liquor inspector, they come (and) say, "Hey, I don't play favoritism, you know." They just go. They don't bother us. (Laughs) Because school days they used to come eat our place, you see.
- WN: Was the bar separate from the . . .
- MU: Separate. They were separate, yeah. But same building.
- WN: So some people would come just to drink, too.
- MU: Yeah, yeah. Drink. We had one bartender. We hired one bartender, this guy named Frank Kakazu. He was popular, too, because a good artist, you know. So when the guys come down there drink, he get pencil and paper, he draw all those guys's pictures. Terrific artist, you know. He don't tell the guys stay still. He just go there, make their drink, and come back make nice pictures, you know. He a good artist. (Chuckles)

WN: What did he do with the picture?

MU: Well, some guys, he gave it to the customer, you know. Big pictures, you know, with the big, dark pencil, yeah (chuckles). Oh, I wish I was an artist, boy. I tell you, I like be artist (chuckles).

WN: The picture looks just like 'em or is it like caricatures?

MU: No, not character. Regular picture. Only the face, yeah. Oh, he was really good (chuckles).

I tell you one incident that happened Smile Café. One Hawaiian lady came over there feeling good, see. So I told the lady, "I'm sorry, I cannot serve you a drink." So she got mad, you know. She took her high-heeled shoes (and started to) pound the counter, see. So I call the cops. So when I call the cop, she standing here, I'm standing here, cop was in the center. We talking, I tell 'em, you know, "She's making trouble." You know what she did? Get the shoe, she (hit) my head, over here.

WN: Wow.

MU: I get a scar, you know. I still get a scar. And you know, when you hit the skull, you know, plenty of blood, yeah. Ho, I don't know how. . . . Somebody went up my house—we live right on John 'Ena [Road], over there see—so they ran up and said, "Hey, Masaji get broken head." (Chuckles) The blood all over me, you know. And then, funny thing, police never charged her because she was one of the policeman's friend. Policeman's mother.

WN: Oh.

MU: Those days, you know. Nowadays you don't get away with it. But those days, you know, different, yeah. You know, hit me right (on my) head. My head (have a *puka*). (Chuckles) I still get the scar, yeah. Lot of those things happened.

MK: So did you have other problems like that, too?

MU: No, no. We had during the wartime, yeah. Wartime, oh, servicemen took over Smile Café about two times. They took over the place. Because you cannot call MP [Military Police]/SP [Shore Patrol]. (During) the war, you know, they back them up. And those days soldiers and sailors, men, they all together, you know. Not like before the sailors and soldiers (used to fight). But during the wartime, they back each other up. Because we said, "Hey, we cannot serve you guys drunk." Not drunk but had enough.

"Oh, yeah. We taking over this place."

And (we) had about two bouncers, you know. They cannot do nothing, boy, those days. (Chuckles)

MK: So what? They take over the place, they just . . .

MU: Oh, yeah, just for a while, you know. They (got) drink, you know. But then we call the SP and MP. But they get away with it.

WN: When they said "take over," what happened to you? Did they just kick you out of the bar?

MU: No. We cannot do nothing. You know, we just call the SP and MP. Then when they come, everything settled. But, I tell you, those guys was mean, boy, those days (chuckles). The service. But when the 442[nd Regimental Combat Team] and the 100th [Infantry Battalion] guys came back from war, everything changed entirely. Yeah, because Japanese, you know. Soldiers came back. Then everything—they used to call us, “Jap,” you know, we work in a bar. “Hey, Jap,” you know. But we couldn’t do anything. But when the 442 and then 100th battalion came back from war, everything changed.

MK: You folks were treated better?

MU: Yeah. Treated different. (Chuckles)

WN: Did anybody tell you, you know, did anybody mention the 442 and the 100th to you? You know that, “You folks all right,” or anything like that?

MK: Oh, yeah. It’s because those guys was hero, yeah. Like me, I volunteer. My group is 442. Because when I volunteered, we had about nine hundred (in our) battalion. We volunteered together with the University of Hawai‘i Japanese boys. We had about eight hundred Japanese. See, so well, they put me headquarters. I was a cook, you know, headquarters. We had about sixty guys. This guys, you know Attorney Ernest Yamane, he was in university. He was in headquarters, too. And so many Japanese, those days, so they got scared. They thought we going sabotage because we were watching these bridges, utilities place, you know. That was our job. So (in) couple of months, they disband us. Had all these Japanese disband. And about hundred guys, leftovers, they put ‘em in 298th, regular soldier. Then they (told) us we out. They give us honorable discharge. So okay. Then I went back Smile Café. I was working, see. Then they call us back again. They told me, “Come back and volunteer for VVV.” That’s Victory Volunteer something.

WN: Varsity Victory Volunteers.

MU: Pick and shovel. Make fence around the (beach). And then when they get through, I didn’t go because why should I go? Get plenty jobs at home. The restaurant was busy those days, see. You know, because we feeding lot of defense workers. You know, all the defense workers came over here. Waikiki full of *Haoles*. We have to feed them. Oh, from four o’clock in the morning we used to feed them. We were so busy.

So anyway, I didn’t go. Then after 442, they got finished building fence, they told ‘em, “Hey, why don’t you guys go volunteer service?” Those are the guys, 442. That’s my gang. I didn’t go. They went and then half of the guys never come back. I was lucky. They threw me out.

MK: Before that you were telling us what happened to you on December 7. Tell us that story. When war started, what were you doing?

MU: December 7th?

MK: Mm.

MU: Yeah, okay. Policemen stop us at the airport and told us, “Sergeant (Nakashima our coach), you gotta go back because (of) war,” yeah. Then me, my kid brother, and this guy named Bolo Mizuno went straight up to Punchbowl. So we go down, we went Punchbowl, we see all these Japan plane coming around Hickam, bombing the place. You know, from Punchbowl. So then we had our radio on. They asked for volunteer to pick up

beds at Schofield [Barracks] 'cause lot of guys got hurt and they making a emergency hospital at Farrington High School. So we went [Fort] Shafter. We almost got shot, you know, [because] (we were) Japanese, yeah. They put us in one truck, we (went to) Schofield, put all the beds in the truck, go to unload at the Farrington High School. And that's it, that's the end. Then we came home.

MK: And that day you folks were gonna go play ball someplace?

MU: Yeah, (we) supposed to play with the Pearl City Japanese Senior League, yeah. So that's when everything (stop).

MK: And we were wondering, too, when did Smile Café move to Kapi'olani [Boulevard]?

MU: Actually (I don't) know, but I think about 1947, they say, around there. When did the war stop? The war end 1944?

WN: Five, huh.

MU: [Nineteen] forty-five? Right after the war, '47. Because they put a road through there, yeah, Smile Café.

WN: So when you were at the old place during the war, you said was real busy. Was it busy because of the location or did you folks actually try to get service people to come?

MU: Well, number one (we had) defense workers here. They all stayed in Waikīkī, *Haoles*, you know, from Mainland. All the defense workers came down here. I don't know, maybe for defense work. Maybe they were digging tunnels or something. But was these *Haoles*, you know, from Mainland. And no more place to eat, yeah. So, (we open) four o'clock in the morning, and the place was all blacked out, you know. All the windows, you know, all blacked out so no light can be seen from up, yeah. And no more food, too, not much. No more much food, you know. So, we (had) Mainland (eggs), when the eggs come from Mainland, they try to avoid submarine, yeah. So they go zigzag, take about one month to reach Honolulu. When they reach Honolulu, the egg yolk is all (broken), not solid. So our menu every morning is scrambled eggs.

(Laughter)

MU: Cannot help. Cannot fry egg. The yolk is not there.

WN: But wasn't rotten or anything?

MU: No, not really. So scrambled egg and, of course, like ham and bacon was pretty hard to get, but we had some kind of connection. So we were really busy. Defense workers come home, nighttime, four o'clock. We didn't have much liquor—we had plenty liquor, but they (were) froze. We cannot sell any American liquor. So only thing we can sell is local-made (liquor) like Five Island Gin, Five Island Rum, you know, local made. But yet, it still (wasn't) enough. So what I do is, you my customer, I give you two coupons, that's all you can buy from me. I give you coupon to do business with me. Otherwise, there's no more end. Ah, going be fight, yeah. So I say, I give two coupon, (chuckles) with a coupon, I selling them drink, (one coupon, one drink).

WN: So normally they would come in with their own coupon?

MU: I give them the coupon. You gotta have, yeah.

- WN: And how did you get the coupon?
- MU: I make my own. Make our own coupon.
- WN: Oh, I see. So that was your way of rationing.
- MU: Yeah.
- MK: Oh.
- MU: Because we cannot, there wasn't enough liquor. So me, bartender those days, yeah. Rum and Coke was popular. (I line the glasses with ice, pour) Coca-Cola and rum. (Chuckles)
- WN: Oh, you line 'em up and then you just pour along the . . .
- MK: Counter.
- MU: I was bartender long time, yeah.
- MK: And then you know, like you were saying, no more food that time. Not much food.
- MU: Not much food.
- MK: How did you folks get your supplies then, to make your food?
- MU: Well, like us, we had liquor, yeah. You know, with liquor you can get anything. Big company, they cannot get liquor, we exchange with liquor, eh, those days.
- WN: Oh.
- MU: Like I used to play golf, too. Cannot buy golf because (to save) don't make new golfballs, see. They needed rubber, yeah. So we buy cheap balls, yeah. But you know, but I cannot get it unless I (had) whiskey. I (had) whiskey, I can exchange with the golf ball. With whiskey, you can get anything. It's worth more than the money.
- WN: But you folks were rationed, too, right, how much the whiskey you folks can carry or buy, right.
- MU: Yeah, right. Everything rationed.
- WN: How did you have so much to be able to trade?
- MU: We didn't have too many. I don't know how many bottles a month we can buy, rationed. We buy, we take 'em to the restaurant, and sell.
- WN: So that time, the individuals were rationed, too, right.
- MU: Yeah, yeah.
- WN: They couldn't buy so much from the stores.
- MU: Yeah.
- WN: You folks . . .

WN: You folks . . .

MU: Every(thing was) ration.

WN: . . . were limited to . . .

MU: Like gasoline was five (gallon) per citizen, yeah. Five (gallon) a month. But just because we were in business, we get ten dollars, two coupons. They give you extra. But nighttime, after eight, you gotta be home. But we have a little privilege because (of) business card, yeah. If you (were) regular citizen, you gotta be home before eight o'clock, otherwise, you know.

MK: And so like you know because it's hard to get food supplies to make the food, and you have lots of customers, did you folks change your menu then? You served like, instead of fried egg you have to make scrambled egg.

MU: But that's, yeah, morning time. But nighttime, especially (we had) plenty chicken, yeah. Chicken, hamburgers like that, you know. But couldn't make anything fancy. Few steaks only, yeah. No more good steak. Anybody with good whiskey get good steak. You know, like Hawaii Meat (Company) and Wilson Meat Company, you know. The big bosses like drink whiskey, yeah. Get good whiskey, you get your beef, too.

MK: And then like you were saying, you know, since you got blackout, how did it affect your hours, you know, at Smile Café. Like from what time to what time were you folks open then?

MU: I think about eight o'clock, we close, because people cannot go out. Yeah, no more business. We (mostly) depended on the defense workers. Oh, they were making good money, huh, defense workers. They spend lot of money.

MK: And then you know because you came from the Big Island, and then you came to live Waikiki. And then all these *Haoles* came, yeah, lot of civilian workers. How did you react to all these *Haoles*? You know, first time you see so many *Haoles*.

MU: Well, these *Haoles* were real nice, though. They were nice. You treat 'em nice, they be nice. And we became good friends. Yeah.

WN: How were the defense workers? Were they like the soldiers or was it different?

MU: No, they nice. They were different. They were good people. Uh-huh, defense workers. Of course like us, let me see, yeah. After the blackout, when they allowed us all-night business after the war, we had lot of major league baseball players used to come our place. Like Joe DiMaggio, Stan Musial. Oh, every Monday they were off, the sailors and soldiers. So (their) hang out was Smile Café. So we (had) about, oh, twenty, thirty major leaguers, you know. Oh we took lot of pictures with them. Joe DiMaggio used to sit over there, he was sergeant, you know. Sit (in the office and) telephone all day, calling New York to (his) wife, you know.

MK: Oh.

WN: (Chuckles) What did he used to order?

MU: I don't know. Cannot be too particular. No more good food those days.

(Laughter)

MU: But those guys (were) in service, so they eat good (food). So don't need (to) worry, yeah. But when they go out, mostly for drinks (and good time).

WN: You know, you folks made plenty money and, you know, like they paid cash and I was wondering, did you folks use some of that money to, you know, get more food from wholesalers, things like that? I know you used liquor, but did you . . .

MU: No. We didn't do that.

MK: And you were saying like suppliers, they'd rather have the liquor than the money.

MU: Yeah, liquor. Because they couldn't get (good) liquor, yeah, because all the good whiskeys were frozen already. But we had some put aside, (all) Mainland good whiskeys.

MK: And then so how long did you stay with Sam's then? How long did you stay with your brother's café?

MU: Well, all the way until I started 'Ilima Drive-Inn, yeah. I think about 1955, yeah, I started 'Ilima Drive-Inn.

MK: Yeah. Oh, but you know before that, we forgot. You know, we have in our notes that about sometime in the 1940s after the war, you had the Ford Island cafeteria?

MU: Yeah, yeah.

MK: How did that happen?

MU: Well, see, we had a lot of defense workers working. Some guys worked in Ford Island and they come and eat (at) our place, (told) me, "Hey, why don't you go bid over there? They looking for guys to run the Ford Island restaurant."

So I said, "Hard to bid, you know. Anyway, I'll try." So one day (we) had a meeting over there. We go (across on) the ferry, yeah. And had about twenty guys. Plenty Chinese, and all *kine* nationality, they bid, you know, how much they gonna sell (the) hamburger steak. But me, I took my attorney with me. So we didn't bid, but we (just told) 'em what (our intention is). You see, because if we can buy meat at (the) commissary, we can (serve) cheap. And I told them, we (will) show (our) book. If we make money, we gonna do something. So without bidding, we had a meeting, you know. (At that time) Captain Dudley was the boss man. He say, "Oh, I'm picking Mr. Uyehara." (He choose me.) So after that, anyway, to make a long story short, he and I became good friends. Because I was playing golf. I was playing baseball. He took me out to golf. So we became really good friends.

(Laughter)

MU: So when you become good friends with the boss of the island, *chee*, you know.

(Laughter)

MU: So anyway . . .

WN: You mean, before or after you got the bid? You were friends with him before . . .

WN: You don't know how you got in?

MU: He just liked me. Because, well anyway, this a long story. But when I went there, had a cafeteria, can sit about two thousand guys. The floor was black-and-white checkered type. But you cannot see black-and-white. When I took my crew over there, I think I had about eight guys, I hired eight guys. One day we wash, we clean the place. Oh, the place looked black-and-white just like checker board. We make 'em so nice, the inspector come there. One of the inspectors is lieutenant commander, commanders, you know, about six, seven guys (come). Oh, they so happy, yeah. Because before, I think, Chinese guys was running the place. That's why they wanted some new guys. Anyway, because of that, they really liked me and then I (made) money. I say, "Okay, Thanksgiving today, free turkey (for) everybody." You know, I used to do that, see. You know, then I used to play ball with those guys. Softball. In the meantime, we used to serve about, let me see, I think about sixteen hundred guys, yeah.

MK: Wow.

MU: Three shifts. They come in three shifts, yeah, come down the line, cafeteria (style). Then after few months (things) was getting slow because war (was over). No more jobs already, (few guys were working). And of course they were charging me \$450 rent, just straight rent. And I buy my meat, food stuff, from commissary. Vegetables, I take from outside. They made one trailer for me. So I (pull) 'em on the back of my station wagon. My (menu) price was cheap. They're all happy. But then come real slow down. And then, oh, they made me (nice) coffee counter (at) the ferry landing place. Because in the morning, guys wait over there for the ferry. So I serve coffee and doughnut, you know, pastries. But anyway, then, let me see, oh, yeah. The (restaurant) was getting slow, slow, slow. So one day I told the captain, "Hey, Captain, you know. . . ." In the meantime, was good friends with him. "Masa, you want to come down here, you (can) see me anytime, you just come in." You cannot go there see captain, like that. (But) he (told) me, "You (can) come anytime."

So I go there captain's office, "Hey Captain, I have to quit here because I'm not making money (anymore, less people working)."

He say, "Oh, yeah? Well okay we'll have a meeting." They call a meeting right away. All the commanders and all the guys, you know, (get together at the captain's office. Captain said,) "Well, you see, Masa want to quit here because he's not making money. He showed me (his) book." Before he used to serve about thousand seven hundred guys, now (it's) about thousand guys. See, it's almost half. And rent is same. (He said,) "As of today, rent all free." (Chuckles) He tell me, "As of today, rental is free. You know, Masa is doing a good job." Nobody can say anything. He just tell those guys that that's it, meeting adjourned.

(Laughter)

MU: I tell you, that's how they operate, yeah, military. The boss say, everything free. So I had to stay there.

(Laughter)

WN: Rent was the only thing that you paid the military?

MU: Yeah.

- MU: Yeah.
- WN: That was the only thing?
- MU: Uh-huh.
- MK: So the military, they weren't making money off of the place?
- MU: Only rental.
- MK: Only the rental from you?
- MU: Yeah. So I had to sell the food cheap, yeah. But yet, wasn't making money because I had my employees. I had about six or eight guys. So he tell me free. So I have to stay. Then I told my kid brother, "Majo [Matsujiro Uyehara], go take care." Then I opened up 'Aiea Drive-Inn, yeah.
- WN: So what meals did you serve at Ford Island?
- MU: Oh, all kinds. I served roast chicken, chicken à la king, beef curry, beef stew, veal cutlet, pork cutlet, chopped steak, corned beef hash, oh everything. But I make about four (entrées) every day. Four entrées, four different kind. Because you cannot make too many because you going waste the food, yeah. Then anytime when the food short, first thing you do is open corned beef and make corned beef cabbage. (MK laughs.) Because you don't know how many guys coming.
- WN: Yeah, yeah.
- MU: Sometime you short of food.
- WN: Was cafeteria style?
- MU: Cafeteria style. They all line up. I put a dessert there, salad there, and entrée here. They pay at the cash register. They sit in the big cafeteria.
- WN: And this is dinner. What about lunch?
- MU: Only lunch.
- WN: Only lunch?
- MU: Only lunch.
- MK: And just for the workers on Ford Island?
- MU: Yeah.
- WN: And you didn't live on Ford Island. You had to go ferry every day?
- MU: Yeah, ferry. I pick (my) employees in my station wagon. Pull the trailer, little cart, yeah, that trailer, we go (to the restaurant).
- WN: Where were you living at the time?

MU: I think Kapi'olani, yeah.

WN: So what time did you have to wake up to (chuckles) go . . .

MU: Yeah, about fifty, sixty years, I've been getting up (about 3 A.M.) in the morning (to go work).

(Laughter)

WN: So you get up three o'clock, get ready, pick up your employees, go to the ferry place, and ride the ferry. Oh, when did you get all your groceries and stuff? When did you get all the vegetables?

MU: Vegetables?

WN: Yeah.

MU: Oh, vegetables, day before have to get 'em ready, yeah.

WN: Oh, I see.

MU: Yeah, put 'em in the trailer. And meat we can (buy) at the commissary there, see.

WN: Oh, I see. So after you served lunch and cleaned up and everything, then you went . . .

MU: Come home.

WN: Wow.

MU: So only (lunch) so, you know, hard to make money, yeah. You know, get all the employees. You cannot just pay them half a day, you know. (Chuckles)

WN: So how did the cooking style, how different was it at Ford Island as opposed to like Kau-Kau Corner or Sam's Smile?

MU: Ford Island, their utensils (was) first class, yeah. Nice stove, nice steamer, those guys, so easy to work. Easy.

WN: So did you have to cook, you know, I know you have to cook more quantities?

MU: We have to guess, yeah. You don't know how many guys (we) going (to serve). Sometimes more, sometimes less, yeah. (At the) restaurant, (we) make hamburger steak or roast beef. When left over, you can ground, (and) make a hash. (No) waste, see. So like beef stew, well, you can use next day. But lot of things you cannot use. You make corned beef cabbage. You cannot use next day, you know. So it's hard, you know.

MK: And you know like you mentioned you used to pick up your employees and go over there. What was your job over there? You're the owner, you're the boss.

MU: Over there I don't cook.

MK: You don't cook.

- MU: Yeah, I don't cook. I just stay in the office to write up, make menu, buy things, you know, that's all.
- WN: So actually your six employees cook for 1,700 people?
- MU: Yeah.
- WN: Wow.
- MU: Well, me, it's so easy. It's not hard.
- WN: (Chuckles) What about like beverages? You were in charge of beverages?
- MU: Yeah, yeah. We have all *kine* drinks over there. Coffee, punch (was a best seller), yeah. That's why coffee and punch is enough already. (WN chuckles.) And iced tea, yeah.
- MK: And then like who were your employees those days?
- MU: Oh, one of my sister-in-laws used to work for me. She (was) cashier. I get some *Uchinanchu* boys, my friends. All Japanese Okinawa boys, young boys. And those days, even me, I was young, yeah, so I can cook, too, yeah. All my restaurant business, drive-inn business, I did all the cooking. I did all the cooking.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

- MK: You know, I noticed in these *Orokun-chu* businesses, yeah, lot of relatives worked, right? Like you were working with your brothers, Smile Café.
- MU: Yeah.
- MK: And then you said that the Ford Island cafeteria, your sister-in-law was with you, too.
- MU: Uh-huh.
- MK: How was it working with family? You know, when you have family working as your employees.
- MU: You know, those days we all get along with each other, yeah. They all help each other so we had no problem.
- MK: Okay.
- MU: No problem, yeah. Smile Café I used to work with my two sisters, you know. One younger one and one the older one, you know, they were waitress, yeah.
- MK: So even at Sam's place then, had you, Sam, two sisters.
- MU: Two sisters.
- MK: So real family, yeah.

So, you know, everything (was) cheap. Dinner was fifty cents. You get steak, dessert, drinks.

MK: And I wanted to know, you know, when you have family working together, you folks get the same pay as non-family?

MU: I guess so, yeah. Yeah.

MK: How about working hours? Do you work more than the hired ones?

MU: I think (we) work longer hours. Like me and Sam used to work longer hours. Well, my sisters, I think, they work, those days, about ten hours, yeah. See, in the morning they go in. And then they work till (2 P.M.). And they go home. Only few guys stay back. They wear kimono nighttime. They (start) about five o'clock, and they work till about twelve o'clock, one o'clock in the morning. Eh, those days, used to work hard, though.

MK: Wow.

WN: This was at Smile?

MU: Yeah.

MK: But that was just a custom that dinnertime the waitresses changed to kimono?

MU: Yeah, yeah. Lunchtime they wear uniform and work. And then after they go home—and those days we had a big home at John 'Ena Road, yeah. They all go (to) the house, changed clothes. Those days the girls worked really hard. Working (for) dollar a day.

WN: Did all the other Oroku restaurants, they wore kimono, too?

MU: That, I don't know. But I don't think so, you know, because those guys (start their business) way after us, yeah. Oroku those days, *chee*, about the first guys, I think, you know, besides American Café and Hibiscus Café. They were existing already.

WN: Now did they wear kimono?

MU: No, no. Those guys never wore because I think those guys they're, oh yeah, they're open till late night, yeah? Hibiscus Café used (to open) all night, I know. I remember. I don't know about American Café.

MK: But only your place had nighttime waitresses in kimono.

MU: Yeah.

WN: Whose idea was that?

MU: I don't know. I guess because *Haoles* like kimono. We (had) lot of tourists (who) used to come down there, too, see. Waikīkī tourists.

MK: Oh, okay. I give them credit wearing kimono and serving (chuckles).

MU: Tired, yeah. Oh, you know, nice kimono with *obi*, you know.

MK: Oh, my goodness.

MK: Oh, my goodness.

MU: I get some pictures over here.

MK: So anyway, Ford Island cafeteria as the workers got less and less, you got less business. He made it rent free, you still had it, then you . . .

MU: After that we really went down. So we closed.

WN: Nobody took over?

MU: Nobody working already. Only few guys. Maybe they take their own lunch.

WN: Yeah, so this was about 1950, '51?

MU: Let's see, when? I don't know. But Captain was my pal, though. Captain (Dudley). I never forget that *buggah*.

(Laughter)

MU: Well you be honest and you show your book and if you making money, so what. Every Christmastime, everybody, free turkey. You know, naturally, they be happy. They trust me.

MK: And then after Ford Island cafeteria, you opened 'Aiea Drive-Inn?

MU: Yeah. 'Aiea Drive-Inn.

MK: How come you opened up a business in 'Aiea?

MU: Well, because you know we get a lot of (salesmen) come around, yeah. They tell me, "Hey, try open over there, good, I think."

Say, "Okay." So we go there. Mr. Komu was the big (landowner) over there, 'Aiea side, yeah. 'Aiea Supermarket, they own all the property over there. The daughters are Dr. Mitsuda's wife, Dr. Kuramoto's wife. Only two daughters in that family.

WN: Yeah, the post office is there.

MU: Speedy Supermarket, you know Speedy.

MK: Yeah, yeah.

MU: The whole thing over there, owned the place, see.

MK: So that was below Moanalua Road then, by Speedy?

MU: Yeah, lower side. One (day), did I tell you? One car came straight (in the restaurant). (She) saw our (drive) so came right inside, drove (into the restaurant and fire started so) I quit.

WN: That how you—oh, okay. (MU chuckles.) You went out of business from 'Aiea.

MU: Well, same time I was building ('Ilima Restaurant at) Māpunapuna.

MK: Oh.

WN: 'Ilima?

MU: 'Ilima.

WN: Oh, I see.

MU: 'Ilima Catering. I was building over there. When that place burned down, I say, "I quit." So then I moved Māpunapuna. I lost money over there.

WN: Yeah? I mean how come you lost money?

MU: Because that car had only \$10,000 liability insurance.

WN: Oh.

MU: So you know who got the insurance? The landlord (to repair) the building, landlord got all the insurance money. I end up with almost nothing. Because (everything burn) down, my paper goods, and just everything. I had three deep fryers, about three or four ice box, you know. Good thing (because) thing was all paid for, otherwise, I lose (more) money, you know.

WN: Where was it? Next to Speedy's?

MU: Yeah. Downtown side. The new building, where they put up a new building over there, see.

WN: It's a shopping center now, yeah?

MU: Yeah, new building, yeah. I was far on the right side. I (rented) two (spaces) over there, see.

WN: So you lost money because of that car thing. But how was business, though, in general?

MU: Oh, was all right at the beginning.

MK: And then what kinds of food did you serve at 'Aiea Drive-Inn?

MU: Same thing like my 'Ilima Drive-Inn. You know, (all) local stuff.

WN: So you say "drive-inn," that's carhop service?

MU: No.

WN: Oh.

MU: Window. Mostly all window and I had dining room, too. I had about six, seven tables, dining room.

MK: So when you say like "local food," you have your sandwiches, your hamburger.

MU: All *kine* sandwiches.

MK: Plate lunch?

MU: Yeah, plate lunch, everything.

WN: So the window *kine* service, was that new at that time?

MU: I guess so, yeah, those days.

MK: How come you didn't have carhop?

MU: No more space over there. That parking (was) for the tenants over there, see.

WN: I see.

MK: Oh.

MU: But (at) 'Ilima Drive-Inn at King Street, I had a carhop. But I quit. I told you I quit because I was making good money, but yet every week I got to buy utensils. You know, those days no more such thing as plastic spoon, plastic forks, you know. No more plastic cups. Everything, we have regular utensils, you know—spoons, glass, everything. No more such thing as plastic. So when you serve, customer take one spoon home, take one glass home. Every week I gotta go buy. So I finally I say, "I going (to) quit this business." Carhop stop.

MK: So like 'Ilima Drive-Inn, you had carhops, you said? And then you serving sandwiches, hamburgers, plate lunch.

MU: Yeah, I had a dining room, too, in there.

MK: Dining room?

MU: Yeah.

MK: But you serving on regular plates, regular utensils, and everything?

MU: Yeah. So now, I think, I wish somebody would open one drive-inn because now (all) plastic (utensils), you just throw (them away). (Now) everything is plastic, I think (they) gonna make money. Because these young guys, you know, when they take the girls out, they don't want to go in, they want to eat in the car, yeah. I still (think is) good money (business), to me, I think. I think somebody can.

WN: The only reason why you didn't do it in 'Aiea was because you didn't have the parking space.

MU: Yeah, yeah. But even at 'Aiea, I don't think I would do. Those days, nobody have plastics.

WN: Yeah, how do you do window service when you don't have plastic? Like if you have window service, how did you serve a plate lunch?

MU: Oh, those days, plenty chopsticks, yeah.

MK: Chopsticks—wooden ones, yeah?

WN: Oh, wooden chopsticks.

MK: Didn't they have wooden forks before?

WN: Yeah. No?

MU: No more.

WN: So what about paper plates? Did you have paper plates?

MU: Yeah, we had paper plates. Paper plates and you wrap 'em up. I wonder, those days—who had. Maybe 'Aiea, we had plastic spoons, I think we had.

WN: Maybe wooden, yeah? Wooden chopsticks.

MU: Plastic (utensil), I think we had. Because I know King Street drive-inn (had) punch bowl, you know, plastic punch bowl?

MK: Yeah.

MU: Those days they just (started to make plastic utensils). I know the lady there, (Harders and Co.,) she's the boss lady. (So) when they bring plastic (things), they try it at my place. The (punch) bowl crack every time, you know. (Later on it) was good. Now plastic stuff is terrific, yeah.

MK: Then you know your 'Ilima Drive-Inn, the one that was on King Street, when did you have that? You had that same time as 'Aiea Drive-Inn?

MU: No.

MK: Before?

MU: (Before around 1954.)

MK: And the 'Ilima Drive-Inn, you were a partner, yeah, with some other people.

MU: And 'Aiea (Drive-Inn I was the owner).

WN: So when you had the Ford Island cafeteria, you had 'Ilima at the same time?

MU: I had 'Ilima.

WN: Oh you did?

MU: Uh-huh [yes].

MK: Oh, okay.

MU: After Ford Island finished, then I was running 'Ilima Drive-Inn. Then I started 'Aiea Drive-Inn.

MK: Oh, okay.

MU: See. But I had 'Ilima Drive-Inn, too.

MK: So like how long did you have 'Ilima Drive-Inn?

MU: Well, chee. . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: The 'Aiea Drive-Inn one was yours, though, just yours.

MU: (Yes, just mine.) ('Aiea Drive-Inn I lost in the fire.) In the meantime I was building 'Ilima Catering (in Māpunapuna Street). I was going full-time in catering because 'Ilima Drive-Inn at Kapi'olani was pretty (popular in) catering, see. People were asking (for catering).

MK: How did you get the idea to start a catering business? Because that's different from just in the restaurant.

MU: Yeah, well you see, when you run a restaurant, sometimes people say, "Oh, make (some) food for us." We (did) birthday party. (Graduation, they need food.) Then it became bigger. So we do for wedding, (too). So might as well go in catering business, so we start advertising. And we (had) lot of funeral business from Hosoi [Mortuary]. And when all the Oroku guys died, they all call me. I (give them) good (price). (Mostly) all the Orokus, you know, (we cater for about) four-hundred (people). But I give 'em cheap. I take lot of food. They usually order for about four-hundred (people. Then) about three-hundred (people) come. I give them discount (so they were all happy).

And not only them. Other people (too, so) they used to like me. When the Okinawans have big golf tournament, I used to take care, at Jikoen [Hongwanji], yeah. But then I told them one time, "Hey, don't give me (all) the business because this is all Okinawans." And to make the program they got the ad from Victoria Inn and Wisteria. I told 'em, "Hey, split the business. Give them business, too." You know, split the business because (it's) good. I wasn't too greedy. (Laughs)

WN: So when did you start Māpunapuna?

MU: Nineteen seventy-two.

WN: Oh, okay.

MU: You know (why) I know? Because I kept the (business) license. (Laughs)

WN: Oh, yeah.

MU: And after twenty-(seven) years, I quit.

MK: Wow.

WN: So what were you doing between the time you closed the 'Aiea Drive-Inn and 'Ilima Drive-Inn in the [19]50s, between that and 1972?

MU: What year?

MK: So 'Aiea Drive-Inn you opened in '51, yeah? And you did for about maybe three years, or so.

- MU: Around there, yeah.
- MK: When the car came barreling down into the drive-inn. So that takes us up to 1954, yeah? You had 'Aiea Drive-Inn from about '51, '54, '55, around there.
- MU: We still had Smile Café, too, you know, on Kapi'olani.
- MK: You still had Smile Café?
- MU: Yeah.
- WN: So after you closed 'Aiea, did you go back to Smile?
- MU: *Chee*, I don't know what I did. Because after I closed 'Aiea Drive-Inn, I still had 'Ilima Drive-Inn at King Street.
- MK: Oh, you still had 'Ilima, though. And then, how long did you have 'Ilima, though?
- MU: Which one? King Street?
- MK: 'Ilima Drive-Inn. Yeah, the King Street one.
- MU: I think I really had only about ten years, I think.
- MK: You had about ten years.
- MU: Then I think ten years after that, they took our lease away.
- WN: This was near where Zippy's is now?
- MU: Yeah, yeah. Was half of the property, on the front side only. Back side our landlord had about six houses over there. Landlord was living there, too.
- MK: So like the back side is the parking lot?
- MU: Parking lot, yeah.
- MK: So that's where the landlord was?
- MU: Uh-huh [yes].
- MK: Then you got into the catering business. And did you have a restaurant, too, in Māpunapuna?
- MU: Yeah, yeah. Oh, get up three o'clock in the morning, serve breakfast for a lot of guys working over there, see. Breakfast, lunch, that's it. And dinnertime, most time, I had a catering. So catering outside, deliver, you know, catering outside.
- WN: You didn't open for dinner, the restaurant?
- MU: No.
- MK: So your business over there was mostly the workers then?

MU: Yeah, yeah.

MK: They eat breakfast before they go work.

MU: Yeah, that's it.

MK: And lunchtime, . . .

MU: (Working people only, few outsiders.)

MK: . . . lunch break. And then the catering was mostly nighttime and weekends.

MU: Yeah. Nighttime.

MK: Did you have a reception hall over there, too?

MU: No. I didn't have.

MK: So just the breakfast, lunch, and catering.

MU: That's it.

MK: So how did that affect your staff, then? Because the catering was . . .

MU: Well, we do everything. Because I was cooking, so I do everything. But most times—and then sometimes my kid brother help me. But to make sushi, (I have) ladies (to) come down there make sushi, yeah. And to serve we get outside(rs), other girls, too. But of course, I gotta go every time. Deliver food, you know. (We had) a van, (chuckles) deliver food.

MK: So you used to go?

MU: Sure, I go. Because when I do catering, there's lot of—my friends there, see. Good to go be there, you know, see the friends, eh?

MK: So you were really hands-on *kine* boss, yeah?

MU: Me, rascal bugger, but when it come to business, yeah, I don't want to disappoint my customers, you know, clients. Because I'm always there, watching. That's how you keep your business long, yeah. I'm not like overnight guys, you know. I go there take care of everything. And same time you learn, you know. You go there, you know. So when I go there, see, lot of time, before, you just take the food in the stainless steel and go there, serve. But then (later), I bought a compact warmer. I got about ten warmers, you know. When you put the food in there, about four trays. When you serve, the food is still hot, all day, all insulated. Expensive, costs about hundred-fifty dollars one. But then cold stuff, you can put cold stuff so it will stay cold. I had about ten. Just put 'em in there, go there, open, put 'em on the table. Was good.

MK: So you folks delivered the items . . .

MU: I go there.

MK: . . . you folks served the items.

MU: Yeah.

MK: Clean up, and take everything back.

MU: Some families (we) just deliver. But big one, you know, we go there (and) serve. Weddings, like that, (too).

MK: Oh, so you folks had funeral business. You had . . .

MU: Restaurant business.

MK: . . . wedding business.

MU: Yeah. Birthday parties.

MK: I was wondering, how much of your business was *Uchinanchu*, then?

MU: Well, *Uchinanchu*, could be about half, yeah.

MK: About half. And then over the years, did you change your menu or you . . . ?

MU: Oh, yeah, sometimes you change when you see something good, you know, different every year. Got to improve, yeah. Like wedding, I used to make vegetable net, you put over the fish?

MK: Yeah.

MU: I used to make the flowers, too, (with daikon and carrots,) you know.

MK: Wow.

(Laughter)

MK: So you did that . . .

MU: My father used to be good, see. Before, my father used to make *tsuru kame*, you know, with the small squash, you know. (He made) *tsuru*, with papaya. (He made) a *kame*, you know. And with carrots, (he make) two feet (for *kame*). Oh, my father was good in that, and making net with vegetable *daikon*, yeah. That's where I learned. So (with) *daikon*, I make fish net. I used to make every time.

MK: Oh, my goodness.

(Laughter)

MU: But I really worked, though. I was a playboy, but when it comes to business, I worked hard.

WN: (Laughs) Who was the one who took the orders and had to set the date and all the things like that? You had somebody hired to do that?

MU: I (did).

WN: You?

MU: I make all the portions, everything, menu. I just make the portions, (gave) the cook. So many pounds (of) this, so many pounds of (that).

MK: So like how big a staff did you have, then, to do all this?

MU: Well, let me see. In the kitchen we had about three, four, five. . . . I had about ten guys working for me, I think. (Pause) But I did the work, though. I really worked hard.

MK: So like the catering business, you said you used to wake up three o'clock in the morning?

MU: (Chuckles) Gotta cook rice, eh?

(Laughter)

MK: And then what time did you *pau*?

MU: Catering?

MK: Yeah. Every day, what time did you *pau*?

MU: Well, every day, if no catering, I come home about three o'clock, yeah. But those days, young days, so you don't even sleep, you know. Lot of pep. Funny, you know, (I work hard).

WN: So catering was mostly weekends?

MU: Weekdays and weekends. Mostly weekends. Same time I (play) music, too, (when) the catering. (Chuckles)

WN: At the party?

MU: Yeah. (Chuckles)

WN: Oh.

MK: You provided everything then—entertainment and the food. (MU chuckles.) Oh, boy. And then you stopped after twenty-six years, though, yeah?

MU: Tough, yeah, already.

MK: Was tough, that's why?

MU: Let me see, when I quit (working) I was, I think, *chee*, when I was eighty-five?

MK: Nineteen ninety-nine.

WN: So you were eighty . . .

MU: Eighty-three.

WN: Eighty-three.

MU: *Chee*, that's good enough, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

MK: Wow.

MU: Eighty-three, you supposed to be dead.

(Laughter)

WN: You sold it to somebody?

MU: Yeah, employees.

WN: Oh.

MU: Because nobody can take care. My family (wanted the business but,) if I give to my family, who's gonna work there? Me. (WN chuckles.) I said, "No, thanks." I selling and I getting away with it already. So all this Oroku (restaurant was) all like that. See, you (have) kids, you give 'em good education, you think they going come back? My kids used to help me, you know. But my girls never helped me because my wife was sick, yeah. My wife was sick for fifteen years. I told the girls take care. But still, when my wife died, still they (had) a good job, eh? My sons, you know, sons, can(not) take care of (my) wife, eh?

MK: And your sons, they didn't want to take the business?

MU: Well one of my sons (have) saimin business, yeah, saimin factory.

MK: All Island Saimin, yeah?

MU: Yeah. And the other son, the one that I said was working for me young time. Yeah, restaurant business, *chee*, (Oroku) had about sixty restaurants, yeah, Orokus. How many restaurants now left over? I don't know, we can count maybe three or four? (Chuckles) No more.

MK: How come you did it so long, though? You could have retired earlier in sixties. How come you did it so long?

MU: What (am) I going do if I retire? No more wife. No more nothing to do. If you retire, I think you get in(to) trouble. Yeah. (Chuckles) Because I used to go bar, Korean bar with all the guys. After golfing, (we) used to go there, drink. Spent unnecessary money.

(Laughter)

MK: That's a good way of putting it.

MU: Really crazy, you know.

MK: You know, when you look back then—I mean you spent decades, long, long time in the restaurant business. What do you think about the restaurant business?

MU: Restaurant business good. You work hard. But you got to work, though. You work (hard), you make money.

MK: You know I was wondering, how did it affect your family?

- MU: Yeah, we didn't have too good (time). Oh, my wife died early, but if she was living, maybe I don't think she'd be happy. Yeah. (Every) restaurant's owner, day and night, they work, yeah. Oh, really. That's the only way you can make money, eh?
- WN: You know all the restaurants you had, along with Smile Café, you had *da kine* sit-in restaurant, you had carhop, you had cafeteria, you had window service, and then you had catering. Of all those ways to serve food, what was the best, in your opinion?
- MU: Best of. . . .
- WN: What do you think was the most successful for you? Which one was the hardest to do? Which one was the easiest?
- MU: I think a restaurant serving inside, I don't think you make money. Window service and catering, I think, you make money. That makes more money.
- WN: Why is that?
- MU: Well, serving inside, too much expense—labor expense. Now going be worse. Now worse. Before, labor was cheap, yeah. Now they (are) all union pay. And now HMSA [Hawaii Medical Services Association] insurance going up, yeah. You have to cover them. You use the employee twenty hours a week, you have to (buy) them insurance.
- MK: The benefits, yeah.
- MU: Yeah. That's the law. So you take like McDonald's and Jack in the Box, those guys, they hire a lot of school kids. They don't give them twenty hours a week. Because (if) you give twenty hours a week, you got to buy them insurance.
- WN: Right.
- MU: They (all work) short hours. But when you come to restaurant business, like us, you cannot do that.
- WN: But catering you could do that?
- MU: Catering you can, because once in while.
- WN: So would you say that the reason why you could stay in business for so long was because you kept changing the way you operated?
- MU: Not because changing. I had my business. I don't know. I was pretty lucky.
- MK: Then you know you made the comment that there used be like sixty, seventy *Orokun-chu* restaurants, yeah. So many all over O'ahu. What do you think made *Orokun-chu* good at the restaurant business?
- MU: Well, we started from American Café and Hibiscus Café, yeah. And those days, only way you can make money, I think, (we went into) restaurant business because no more (other) jobs, yeah, those days. So they all go to American Café, Hibiscus Café, and work little while there, and learn (restaurant) business. As soon as they learn, they open one. My oldest brother learned from Hibiscus Café. He was a carpenter before. Sam, (those) depression days, no more jobs. So nighttime he (goes) there, learn how to cook. Then we opened Smile Café.

Then from (Smile Café), you take like a guy used to own Sierra Café, young boy, can just learn how to cook. Ramona Café (owner), he was working with us. Aloha Grill (owner), he used to work with us. He used to wash dishes, (we all work) together, you know, same age, yeah. And then they learn how to cook, like even New Capitol, Bert Uyebara, he was a waiter. And he learned how to cook. They all learned from our place, too. Then some guys learned from their restaurant. They're all friends. Oroku people, they hire Oroku people. They work hard, you know.

WN: So was it understood that some of these guys are gonna open their own restaurants?

MU: (Yes,) because they're hustlers, Oroku. You know, "Some guys making money (in) restaurant (business so they all) open, too." You know, they hustlers.

WN: You didn't see it as competition?

MU: No. We didn't see it as a competition.

WN: Because I guess today people would think of it as competition. (MU chuckles.) But maybe in those days . . .

MU: Plenty business. As long as you don't open next door, you know.

(Laughter)

WN: Well, you know, like you said earlier, you know all the Oroku would hire you to cater things and then you told 'em, "Hey, why don't you give the other people business." You think that was a typical kind of way of thinking among you folks?

MU: I don't know about (them), but that's what I. . . (Laughs) I don't think everybody like me, though. They too greedy. That's why I'm poor. I'm not greedy.

(Laughter)

WN: We done?

MK: I think so.

WN: Okay.

MK: Finally.

WN: I think we're finished. Thank you.

MK: Thank you. (MU chuckles.)

END OF INTERVIEW

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